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SOME
MEMORIES
OF BOOKS, AUTHORS,
& EVENTS.

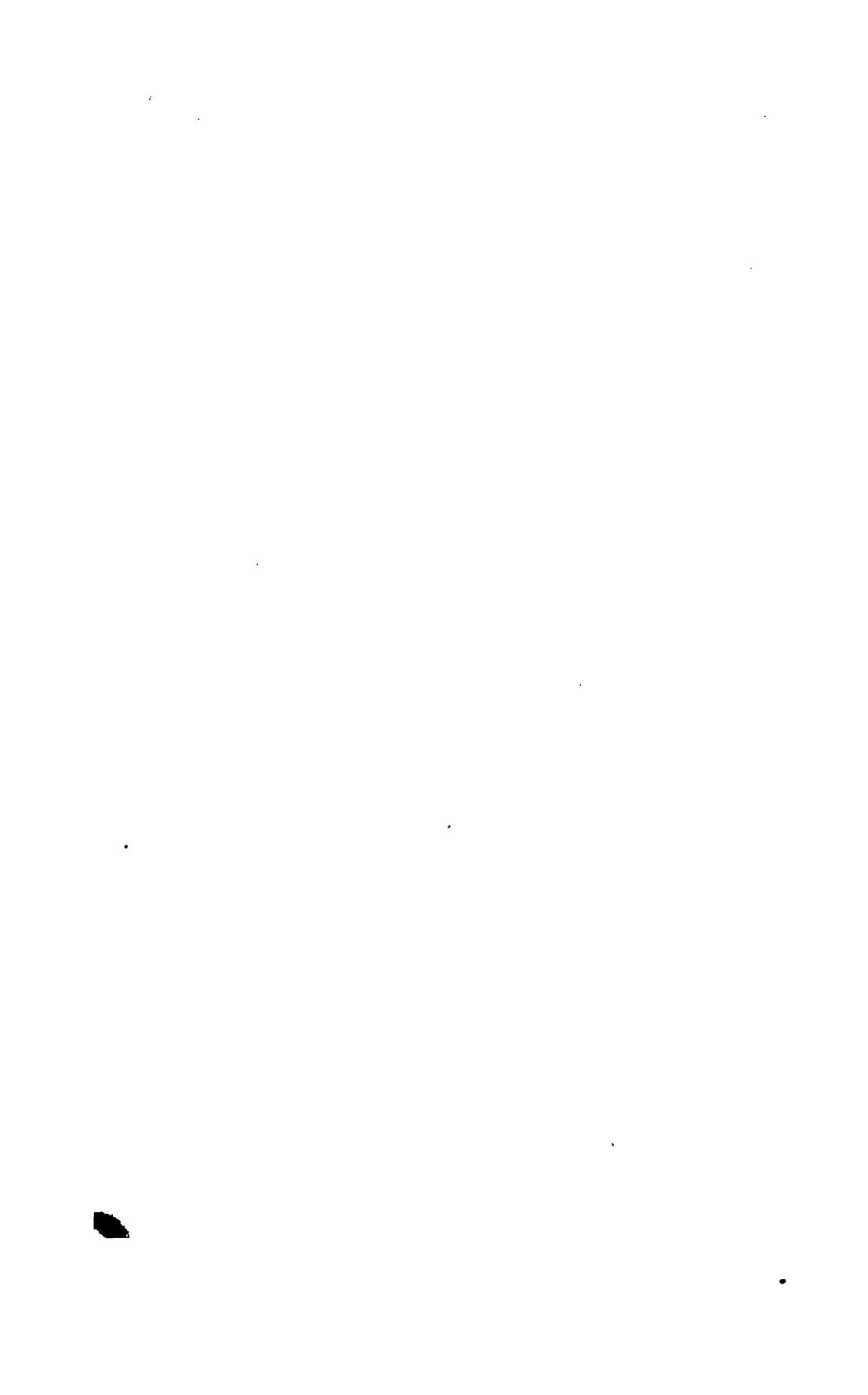
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SOME MEMORIES
OF
BOOKS AUTHORS AND EVENTS



SOME MEMORIES
OF
BOOKS AUTHORS
AND EVENTS

BY
JAMES BERTRAM
AUTHOR OF
"THE HARVEST OF THE SEA" ETC



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P R E F A C E

THE present being an age of literary and professional reminiscences, I offer no apology for following the fashion, and I trust that what is said in these pages may be found to possess some interest, more especially to persons desirous of being introduced behind the scenes of literature.

Full fifty years having elapsed since my connection with publishing first began, many of the more or less celebrated characters with whom I have been in touch have gone over to the majority, but of not a few the memory is still green. Sir Walter Scott, Francis Jeffrey, Thomas de Quincey, "The Ettrick Shepherd," "Christopher North," John Gibson Lockhart, are still names to conjure with ; and, though I can tell little or nothing of them, or of others less famous that may be considered extraordinary, still some of my gossip

may prove interesting, and serve to supply a touch here and there for a more comprehensive picture of the authors, books and events of the thirties and forties of the present century.

J. G. BERTRAM.

GLASGOW, 1891.

MEMOIR

JAMES GLASS BERTRAM, the writer of these "Memories," was born in 1824, at the little border village of Tillsmouth. While he was yet a child his parents, who were in humble circumstances, removed first to the town of Haddington, and again to the vicinity of Edinburgh. His early boyhood was spent in the village of Davidson's Mains, and he received his education at the neighbouring school of Slateford. At the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to Mr. William Tait, the proprietor of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, in whose employment he rose, before he had attained his majority, to the position of managing clerk and cashier. This situation, however, he soon abandoned for the stage, and it is to be regretted that he did not devote a chapter of his "Memories" to his experiences as a strolling player, the little book which he founded on them—

"Glimpses of Real Life"—being no longer in print. Finding himself, after three years' trial, unable to gain a living as an actor, Mr. Bertram returned to Edinburgh, and endeavoured to establish himself as a bookseller and news agent; but this failing of success, he earned a livelihood for the next few years by contributing to *Chambers's Journal*, *Hogg's Instructor*, and similar periodicals. In 1855 he was appointed editor of the *North Briton*, one of the numerous penny newspapers established on the abolition of the compulsory stamp. It was published twice a week, and seems to have been conducted on the lines of what is now called "the New Journalism." It was the first newspaper to introduce the serial story as a regular part of its contents; and the first to publish "interviews." After a somewhat noisy, and tolerably successful, career of fifteen or sixteen years, the *North Briton's* fortunes began to decline, and Mr. Bertram, who had latterly been proprietor as well as editor, was obliged to part with the paper in 1872. He continued to be editor, however, for another year, after the expiry of which he

moved westward to assist in the establishment of a new Conservative morning paper, the *Glasgow News*. It never attained financial success, and Mr. Bertram soon lost his post of assistant editor. In 1856, while managing the *North Briton*, he had attempted to set up a halfpenny morning paper called the *Bawbee*—in this venture also he was a pioneer—but only a few numbers appeared. A somewhat less unfortunate speculation was a weekly edition of the *North Briton*, called the *Scottish Thistle*, which came to an end in 1859.

During the period covered by these newspaper editorships Mr. Bertram's energies were by no means absorbed by journalism. He produced a three-volume novel entitled "The Stolen Heir," which had some success both in serial and book form; and the previously mentioned semi-autobiographical "Glimpses of Real Life, as seen in the Theatrical World and Bohemia." This appeared in 1864, and about the same time the author composed a pantomime founded on "The House that Jack Built," which had a long run at the Theatre Royal, Dundee, whose manager had com-

missioned it. He also wrote an "Entertainment" for two performers, which, with able interpreters, achieved some success.

These employments did not exhaust Mr. Bertram's versatility, for early in the sixties he took up the serious study of our Fisheries, visiting the chief centres of the industry both in Great Britain and on the Continent. He also acted occasionally as special correspondent for various newspapers at Fishery Exhibitions. The knowledge thus gained resulted, as was natural, in the chief literary work of his life—the well-known, popular and practical "Harvest of the Sea," brought out by Mr. Murray in 1865, and several times reprinted. In the preface to a revised and expanded edition which appeared in 1873, Mr. Bertram said :—

"The 'Harvest of the Sea' has been a great success—not because it has sold so well that a third edition is now called for, and that the critics and reviewers have praised it highly, but because it has led to a continuous discussion of fishery economy ever since the volume was issued from Albemarle Street, and has therefore, in the best sense, fulfilled its

mission. All fishery subjects are now discussed with calmness, as well as increased knowledge. . . . Common sense has triumphed, and much in our fishery economy that was wrong has been made right."

About 1870 Mr. Bertram compiled for the late John Camden Hotten "A History of the Rod," which was published under the assumed name of the "Rev. W. M. Cooper, B.A.," and ran into several editions.

After leaving the *Glasgow News* in 1874, Mr. Bertram did not again attach himself to the permanent staff of any newspaper, but gave himself up for the remainder of his industrious life to miscellaneous journalism and literature, contributing largely to the provincial weekly press, and to periodicals of every degree. He had always taken much interest in all kinds of sports, and for some years wrote regularly in *Baily's Magazine*. He described "The Out-Door Sports of Scotland," and compiled a volume of "Sporting Anecdotes," both works being issued under the pseudonym of "Ellangowan." His latest publications were "The Blue Ribbon of the Turf"

(1890), and "A Mirror of the Turf," both purporting to be written by "Louis Henry Curzon." The proof sheets of the "Mirror" were revised during the last months of the author's life, and he did not live to see it issue from the press. Mr. Bertram had always enjoyed excellent health until he was attacked by influenza in the spring of 1891. From the effects of this he never fully recovered, and he passed away on March 3, 1892, in his sixty-eighth year.

Mr. Bertram has a claim to remembrance as one of the earliest pioneers of cheap and popular journalism, and as the author of "The Harvest of the Sea"; also, perhaps, as a strikingly typical example of the literary "man of all work," whose career extended over two generations. By surviving friends he is remembered as a kindly and pleasant companion, whose native cheerfulness never failed him, during a long and chequered life.

The portrait of Sir Walter Scott, which forms the frontispiece to this volume, is a reproduction of the engraving by F. C. Lewis, after the picture by A. Geddes.

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SOME MEMORIES

'PRENTICE DAYS

I

FIFTY-FOUR years ago, at the age of thirteen (or to be more precise, in the year 1837), I entered the warehouse of Mr. Tait, the proprietor of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, then a well-known and prosperous periodical, in the capacity of junior apprentice and boy-of-all-work.

The first great fact impressed upon me on arriving at 78, Princes Street, where Mr. Tait's business was then carried on, was that, contrary to my fond anticipations, I should have very little time for reading. As a country boy at a time when books were anything but plentiful in such poor houses as my father's, I used to think no life could be more enjoyable than that of a bookseller or printer with

probably little to do but pass half the day in reading the "Arabian Nights," or narratives of the adventures of shipwrecked sailors. That was a matter on which I was speedily disillusioned, for what with work in the warehouse and message-going outside of it, my time was well occupied. Apprentices in the year 1837 were never allowed to be idle, and work in big bookshops was then both harder and rougher than it is in similar places to-day.

While in "Tait's," during the first year or two of my apprenticeship, any day of my life passed pretty much as follows:—The shop required to be opened every morning punctually at eight o'clock, and as I lived at Morningside (now a part of the city, but then a village two-and-a-half miles distant from Mr. Tait's warehouse), it was necessary I should be up and dressed by half-past six o'clock. Breakfast being hurried over, my day's work began by a smart walk to the head-clerk's lodgings in St. James's Square to obtain the keys of the shop, which had then to be opened, a business of no small difficulty for a young lad. The first process was to take off and lower into an

area nineteen heavy window-shutters. In this toilsome and, on wet or stormy mornings, disagreeable and sometimes dangerous work, the senior apprentice should have taken an active part, but that young gentleman seldom put in his appearance till he was too late to be of much use. The fires, if it were winter time, had next to be laid and lighted, and coals to be brought from the cellar. This accomplished, my next duties were to sweep the floor and dust the counter and desks in the front shop, in the course of which an occasional brief pause in my work was made that I might take a peep at the contents of some book, the title of which took my fancy.

The sort of work indicated did not, as my readers will suppose, take my boyish fancy. After the first few days, when the excitement consequent on the novelty of my position had subsided, I felt as if I would rather be once more among the haymakers, or engaged in a job which used to have many charms for me—that of carrying the bag for the partridge-shooters; and happy memories of oft-enjoyed rambles on Braid or Pentland Hills in search

of the bramble and the blackberry would recur as I lifted down the ponderous shutters, deemed necessary at that period for the protection of shop-windows.

But to resume the narrative of my day's work. About a quarter past nine would arrive the head-clerk, who at once proceeded to open the business letters, and to hand over to the assistants those containing orders for books or magazines, for in addition to publishing his own magazine Mr. Tait supplied a considerable number of country customers with whatever miscellaneous works they sent for. The books wanted generally required to be "collected" from other booksellers or publishers, and to collect them formed, as I speedily found, a portion of my daily work, involving a two or three hours' tramp round "the trade." On my return, the goods obtained were charged to the customers, invoices made out, and packing proceeded with. The parcels had then to be taken to one or other of the coach offices at the east end of Princes Street, or to the quarters of the carriers in the Grassmarket or Candle-maker Row; and, being the younger apprentice,

the duty of burden-bearer, as a matter of course, devolved upon me.

After dinner, for which an hour was allowed, parcels and letters had to be delivered in various parts of the city, and, as the day approached for publication of the magazine, there were proofs to be taken to contributors, or "copy" to the printing-house in St. James's Square, or to the Editor, Mrs. Johnstone, who then resided at Laverockbank, near Newhaven. Sometimes I would be required to rush madly to the General Post Office in Waterloo Place to catch the London mail with some belated missive of importance.

Postage in the days to which I am referring was a serious tax. Many of Mr. Tait's letters and those of his friends were therefore enclosed in the parcels which were frequently despatched to Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall and Co., of Stationers'-Hall Court, who were agents for the magazine. These were posted in London, and a considerable saving thereby effected: a shilling, I believe, on each letter. In similar fashion, letters came from London to be posted in Edinburgh, many of which were, however,

handed to me to deliver. To hunt for franks for letters to political personages not at the time in Parliament was part of my business occasionally: franks for business letters were never asked for by Mr. Tait. Once I was sent to the house of Mr. Gillon, then, I think, member for Linlithgowshire, with instructions to be sure and find him and get the desired franks. It took me four hours to run him down, and I found him at last in a bathing-machine on the beach at Portobello! As soon as the honourable member had finished his toilet, I presented my packet, which he looked at with some curiosity, then he took stock of me, bursting into a very hearty laugh; after driving me up to Tait's shop in his dog-cart, he gave me sixpence, and then greatly amused Mr. Tait and some friends who were with him by describing the circumstances under which he had been captured.

When the hour arrived for shutting shop—nominally eight o'clock, but in practice a good deal later—I was generally pretty well used up, but in spite of my fatigue the nineteen heavy shutters had to be lifted from the area and

screwed to the window, and finally the key had to be carried by me to the head-clerk's, or to Mr. Tait's dwelling-house. But even after the key had been deposited, my work was not always finished. As all places, no matter at what point of the compass they were situated, were supposed to be "on my way home," or, if they were not, the distance or the time involved not being thought of any consequence in the case of an apprentice, it was my fate to have a constant succession of letters or parcels to deliver after hours. Often enough in those toilsome days it was ten o'clock ere I reached my father's house, and not seldom eleven had struck before I sat down to my frugal supper, a meal over which, from sheer fatigue, I many a time fell asleep.

I used sometimes to think that kindling fires and sweeping floors was an eccentric way of learning to be a bookseller, but such was a universal custom of the trade, and it was too sacred to be departed from for my benefit. The sorrows which occasionally befell apprentices fifty years since may be illustrated. One bitterly cold November night, after the shop

had been closed, I was sent off to deliver a letter at a house near Murrayfield, a distance of two or three miles from the warehouse : whilst on my way there, a heavy shower of sleet began to fall, and as my great-coat was not of much account, I speedily became drenched to the skin, and my hands numbed with cold ; so that, when I arrived at the house with the letter, I was really in a pitiable condition. "Wait !" said the servant, and presently, as I stood shivering in the cold lobby, there came to me a lady carefully muffled in a warm shawl ; "Boy, tell your master," she said, "I will come into town to-morrow, if I can take out my horses ; and see ! take this letter as fast as you can to the General Post Office, it must be posted to-night, so lose no time. William, shut the door."

That lady must have seen that my clothes were drenched, in fact a pool of water had dripped from them on to the floor ; but this gave her no concern ; she did not say "Boy, come in and warm yourself, and I will give you a cup of tea." No ! it was "William, shut the door" ; so I faced again the biting blast, and I

am not ashamed to say that I indulged in a good cry, the wet, cold and hunger, proving too much for me. Happily, at the corner of Hope Street, when I got back, I encountered my master's brother, Mr. Charles Tait. He started at seeing me. "James!" he said, "where on earth have you been, and where are you going?" I told him, but seeing I was wet and shivering with cold, he took me into a public-house close by, saying to the landlord, "Look here, Mr. McIntosh, make up a tumbler of negus piping hot for this boy, and give him a thick slice of bread, and a lump of that cold fowl, and let him dry his clothes at the fire." Thus refitted, I made my way to the post office, a full mile away. Whilst nearing home I met my excellent mother coming in great anxiety to seek for me; she had become alarmed, for it was past twelve o'clock. Next day Mr. Charles Tait called at his brother's shop, and told my story; the head-clerk got a scolding for sending me to Murrayfield at such a late hour, and the lady was, I believe, pretty smartly rebuked by Mr. Tait for her conduct in the matter. That lady never in the future

got much of my respect ; a short time afterwards I was again sent to her house, this time in the course of the forenoon, when I had a long wait. On leaving she offered me a penny, but, although pence were then, as now, much esteemed by message-boys, I had the courage to refuse the coin promptly.

I have often since its occurrence thought of that little adventure, and its happy ending through the kindness of Mr. Charles Tait. His brother, my employer, was a most humane man, who would never himself have thought of oppressing any of his servants, but the zeal of head-clerks often outruns their discretion ; and though I was none the worse for my hardships, I tell the story for the benefit of present-day booksellers' apprentices, who are never called upon, so far as my knowledge goes, to endure such trials. Some ladies, to whose houses I was occasionally sent, were much more humane than the Murrayfield dame. Mrs. Johnstone, for instance, who lived at a great distance from Mr. Tait's warehouse, was ever considerate of the wants, both of publishers' boys and printers' devils.

Magazine-time brought extra duties, involving all hands being at work at six o'clock in the morning to pack the supplies of "Tait" for London, usually four heavy bales, each containing seven hundred copies, which required to be got ready by the hour at which they would be sent for by the General Steam Navigation Company. At the beginning of each month, too, there fell to be collected from the various agents a large number of English magazines for Mr. Tait's customers, as also a few copies of "Blackwood"; and at the contents of some of these I often contrived to get a surreptitious "read."

On arriving at "No. 78" with my bundle of magazines and other serials, they were quickly made up for the customers and placed in my hands for delivery, a work which involved long walks and ascents of common stairs; as many, perhaps, as sixty copies of these periodicals requiring to be distributed in different parts of the city. Another oft-recurring duty was the delivery of the catalogues of Thorpe, Bohn, and one or two other London dealers in second-hand books to their customers in Edinburgh,

who seemed, as I then thought, to have nothing to do but to sit in their libraries and wait for them. Among the number, some ten or a dozen in all, a few were always in a state of feverish impatience for their "Thorpe"—notably Mr. Maidment, Mr. Maitland, and Mr. John Shank More. "Has my 'Thorpe' not come yet?" was a frequent question, and "Let me have it the moment it arrives," would be a parting instruction, so that when, on occasion, I was sent with the packet after the shop had been closed, I used to curse "Thorpe" with great vigour.

Then with the beginning of each month the delivery of "the magazine." There were probably not less than 180 subscribers to attend to, the majority of the deliveries falling to the share of the younger apprentice, as, indeed, did all the roughest work of every description. Many a weary "headful" of parcels did I, during the period of my apprenticeship, bear to the carriers' quarters, or to the coach offices, for transport to the country towns of Scotland. Such was my apprentice-life in 1837. Its reward was fixed for the first year

at ten pounds, "to be paid quarterly," with an advance of two pounds for the second year, and two more for the third. After serving three years I was to be paid whatever sum I might, in Mr. Tait's opinion, be worth, and, as I well recollect, that was fixed at twenty-five pounds.

As may be supposed, while engaged in distributing my large share of the magazine delivery every month for a period of two years, I could scarcely fail to pick up a few odds and ends of character among Mr. Tait's customers. One old gentleman, a retired merchant, used to watch for me as I came to his door, and asking me to "sit down and rest myself," gave me at considerable length his opinion of the contents of the previous number. I soon discovered that no reply was expected, the old gentleman's delight evidently being to find a listener. My silent listening was invariably rewarded by a glass of ginger-wine and a slice of seed-cake ; while at New Year time I was presented with a bright new shilling.

Mr. G. H. Girle, a leather-merchant, and town-councillor, and a most genial man, was kind enough to give me a cup of tea on any

very cold winter evening on which my duty took me to his house. He had been educated at Christ's Hospital, and his juvenile experiences there, which he related to me, were often amusing, but the details of the remorseless "birch" administration of the great school in his time used to make my flesh creep. Mr. Girle wrote a history of his Blue-coat days, which he was anxious should appear in "Tait," and one day, at his request, I carried the MS. to the warehouse, but it did not appear in the magazine. He read it, however, to the boys of "George Heriot's Hospital," of which great institution he was one of the "Governors," and it was printed for private circulation, but I have been unable to find a copy of the pamphlet.

Another worthy with whom I became acquainted was a wealthy "Manchester man," retired from business. "Is it not deplorable," he would say to me, "that a man with an income of three thousand pounds a year should be obliged to live on pease-meal brose? Here am I, able to buy every luxury, and yet that is all I am allowed to eat—just at the time, too, when I had been looking forward to no end of

feasting. Oh! it's hard. Yes! it's —— hard; I wonder why Providence cursed me with a liver that doesn't work."

It would have been more polite, perhaps, in these desultory reminiscences, if I had begun with the lady-subscribers, some of whom, living in far-away parts of the south side of Edinburgh, were wont to employ me to execute a variety of commissions for them in the business parts of the city. Most of them were much interested in the magazine. One, "a poor old maid," as she modestly described herself, told me she occasionally wrote a little poetry, and in time confided to me, as a profound secret, that she had sent a few verses to the magazine, in the hope of their being printed in the section called the "Feast of the Poets." Having ascertained the title of the poem, in the course of a few days I visited the printing-office, and asked Mr. Archibald, the overseer, if he had seen it. "Oh yes!" he said, "there it is," handing me the proof; and on my telling him that it was written by a friend of mine, he allowed me to take it away. On the following Sunday afternoon I walked to the house of the

poetess, fully three miles from my home, that I might gratify her with a sight of her production in print. She was somewhat surprised to see me, but when I told her that her poem was to appear in the next "Feast," and that I was the bearer of a proof of it, she was quite overpowered, and, I really believe, felt much inclined to kiss the bearer of the glad tidings, for it was her first appearance in print. She made me stay and dine with her, and insisted on my drinking two glasses of sherry ; and I found that I had made not merely one, but three good women happy, for the poetess had no sooner looked over the proof than she rushed away to the kitchen to show it to her two maids. When bidding me good-bye, she asked me to bring her an extra copy of the magazine, to be sent to a brother in the West Indies ; and when next delivery-day came round I was treated with distinguished consideration. Only one more story of my magazine subscribers, and I have done with them. It is of a lady who seemed never to tire of questioning me about Mrs. Johnstone, of whom she said to me one day, " She writes good novels, but I must say,

although she has written 'Meg Dods,' she keeps a very bad cook, and never gives her friends a morsel they can eat. It's not quite so easy to teach a cook as to write about cookery." That was the way in which that good lady settled Mrs. Johnstone's pretensions.

Shop discipline during the days of my apprenticeship was severe. The creak of the master's boots struck terror to the souls of his assistants, especially when conscience told them they were idling or skulking ; even a glance at a newspaper could not be indulged in without some cunning device being adopted to conceal what was being done. Not only the master, but also the head-clerk was addressed as "Sir." Strict discipline was not confined to Mr. Tait's shop, but common to all such establishments. The head-clerk was first-lieutenant, and consequently had much in his power, so far as arranging the work was concerned. In Tait's that functionary was greatly disliked, being a hard task-master and a person of overbearing manners ; still he had to be propitiated. He had many private messages of his own, which I had to attend to ; and, generally speaking, he

played the petty tyrant to perfection, fawning on his employer and bullying those beneath him, so that when he fell, no one mourned his fall. His fall illustrated to me vividly one of my copy-book legends, and about a year later the same text troubled my mind. My shop-mates invited me to a feast of oysters in Mrs. Dow's well-known tavern in Shakespeare Square. These oysters were the first I had tasted, and I enjoyed them exceedingly, but I was alarmed when I found that the feast had been provided by the sale of a quantity of waste-paper, the proceeds of which ought to have been placed in the shop-till. I hinted my doubts about the matter to the senior apprentice, and quoted my text in aid of my argument, but "it was custom," and he laughed at my scruples. We had, however, an occasional social meeting to which no objection could be taken. At New Year time, when we each received a present of money from our employer by way of "hansel," we used to join purses in providing a little feast in one of the many taverns of the Fleshmarket Close, most of which were famed for their beef-steaks and

marrow-bones. The special house of our affections was kept by a famous man in his line of business ; his charges, however, were moderate, the bill incurred by our little party of five would not exceed seven shillings. For this we enjoyed a good supply of beef-steaks, with vegetables, cheese and biscuits, and perhaps three bottles of that "prime Edinburgh ale," which was the usual accompaniment of such humble feasts, and even of some more pretentious.

Apprentices, fifty years ago, had few pleasures at their command, and half-price to the shilling gallery of the theatre at rare intervals was a treat to be talked about for days before and after. A Saturday-night in Ducrow's or Cook's circus was looked forward to as a fearful joy, when either of these entertainers was announced as coming to the city. There were also humbler places of amusement, where songs and recitations were given, one of these being "Whitefield Chapel;" in Carrubber's Close, which was frequently visited by pleasure-loving but impecunious lads like myself. Another of our chief delights on "Fast-

days" and other holidays, was to walk to Roslin and Hawthornden, taking modest refreshment by the way, at what were called "fish-houses": roadside "publics," where, when you ordered your bottle of ale (then the commonest of all liquid refreshments) you were presented with a liberal cut of well-salted cod or ling, a pawky plan of the publicans to increase your thirst, so as to make the "other bottle" inevitable. Such trips made happy days for us; they lightened the dull drudgery of shop-sweeping, fire-lighting and parcel-packing.

The frequenting of taverns was a feature of Edinburgh social life in the days of my youth, supper being the meal chiefly indulged in, and I have many a time seen jovial parties assembled in these houses on the occasion of my being sent with letters to which answers were required. My employer's brother, Mr. C. B. Tait, was in the habit of giving his friends an occasional supper-party at the "Rainbow," having for his guests some jolly fellows such as P. S. Fraser, a well-known *bon-vivant* and humourist; Mr. W. H. Murray, manager of the Edinburgh theatres; the

Chevalier Galli; Sir William Allan, the painter; John Wilson, the vocalist, and other men who told good stories or sang good songs. Apprentices, of course, contented themselves with humbler hostelries; and as for such grand places as the "Café Royal," in Register Place, and the "Rainbow," on the North Bridge, no bookseller's apprentice, or even head-clerk, would, for a moment, have thought of entering them. At that time society in Edinburgh was split into a series of "cliques"; and these groups of men of kindred feeling, or allied in business or politics, were accustomed to meet in such taverns as those named, and hold "high jinks" till the chiming of the small hours warned them to think of their homes. A great treat of our apprentice days, rare enough certainly, but enjoyed exceedingly, was, when the exchequer would admit of it, to walk on a Saturday afternoon to Newhaven, and partake of a fish-dinner at Mrs. Clarke's—then a famous name in that department of the Scottish *cuisine*. She provided several courses of well-cooked fish, grateful to the voracious appetite of youth; a splendid feast, including

perhaps a dozen oysters to each person as a *hors d'œuvre*, which cost tenpence a head ; so that for about sixteenpence one could not only dine, but accompany the dinner with a modicum of ale as well, and spare a penny besides to the waitress. Poor lads like myself, however, who were always hungry, were glad enough of the humbler fare which came oftener in our way. Many a time and oft, in going on a collecting mission to Oliver and Boyd's (or, as the firm was generally designated in the trade, "O. and B."), did I indulge in a boiling-hot pennyworth of black-pudding, confectioned in a small shop close to Tweeddale Court, where that firm, then as now, carried on business ; on the cold wintry days such a refecton was greedily enjoyed.

Another gastronomic treat was to indulge in one of "Spence's hot pies," in his tavern in Hunter Square, a favourite haunt of apprentices who, like myself, were not able because of the distance to go home to dinner, and required either to bring a "piece in their pockets," or be provided with a few coppers to purchase their mid-day meal. My own allow-

ance was twopence-halfpenny per diem, and I never, like *Oliver Twist*, asked for more ; for, at the well-known eating-house in the east end of Rose Street kept by kindly Jenny Anderson, it provided a substantial meal—say, excellent sheep's-head broth, a savoury trotter, and a penny loaf.

Many an Edinburgh man of good repute and high position has, in the days of his apprenticeship, sat at the humble board of Mrs. Anderson, who kept two dining-rooms—one for those who had a cut from the joint of the day ; the other for the “kail-suppers,” as Jenny's servant called her mistress's humbler customers. I remember very well meeting there a bright young fellow, who afterwards became Master of the Merchant Company ; and others who rose to be town-councillors and magistrates. But there were apprentices who could not even attain to the luxury of sheep's-head broth. One sturdy boy used to bring with him to the shop a handful of oat-meal, which, by the aid of boiling water, a pinch of salt and a spoon, he made into “brose,” and gladly ate for his dinner. His father, who was

ploughman on a farm two miles from Edinburgh, lived to see his son gain a great reputation as a politician and journalist.

I trust none of my readers will think such details of 'prentice life too sordid for the dignity of print. They are given their place as genuine contributions to the stock of information for that half of the world which is reputed to be anxious to know how the other half lives. They interested me much at the time, for (I am not ashamed to say) I was always hungry. On days when Mr. Tait accepted an invitation to an impromptu dinner at some tavern, or at the house of a friend, a message would be sent to his housekeeper of his change of plans; and as the boy who conveyed it was usually invited to "sit down" to a portion of what was being prepared for the master, I was glad enough to be the messenger.

A word or two of my colleagues. In the course of his business career Mr. Tait employed many assistants, but my knowledge only extends to some half-dozen of them. One became in his latter days a zealous

missionary on behalf of Mormonism ; and the last news I heard of him was of his suffering martyrdom by being well-ducked in an English mill-pond. Another of Mr. Tait's apprentices enriched himself as a "tally-man" in the manufacturing districts of England. George Troup became a keen politician and theologian, and an active, earnest and clever debater, well known in his time as the editor of several Scottish journals, among others, of the *Witness*, when it became a daily paper. W. F. Watson attained deserved success as a bookseller in Princes Street, where besides books he dealt in autographs, portraits, and drawings relating to Edinburgh. My immediate companions were agreeable enough. My fellow-apprentice came from Berwick-on-Tweed, and lived in lodgings ; he was something of a dandy in his way—always wanting new clothes ; and as postage was high, he communicated with his parents by means of pasting printed words upon a newspaper, "Want trousers," or "Send new coat" ; such requests forming the burden of his correspondence. "Tommy," one of the assistants, "passing rich on forty pounds a

year," used to make our mouths water by more or less imaginative tales of splendid suppers at which he was entertained by his friends.

Much is being said and written now-a-days about the influence of books on the formation of character ; let me therefore mention that my prime favourites while at Tait's were "Cobbett's Advice to Young Men," and Charles Knight's "Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties"; which I read over and over again with great zest, and, I hope, much benefit. As a matter of course I also read *Tait's Magazine* regularly, making myself familiar with its contents even before its publication ; the elaborate reviews of many of the best books of the period affording me the opportunity of picking up a considerable amount of useful information. Curiously enough, the reading of the "Waverley Novels" was to me a task of difficulty ; and I am ashamed to say that I have only read four of them, "Guy Mannerling," "The Heart of Midlothian," "The Bride of Lammermoor," and "St. Ronan's Well." "Waverley," although attempted more than once, failed to attract. My father, who was in

the employment of Mr. Cadell, Sir Walter's publisher, brought home "The Monastery," the "Fortunes of Nigel," and several others, much to the delight of my mother, who never could understand how so voracious a reader as myself did not take to them ; but so it was, and now my children express the same surprise, and unsuccessfully recommend me to try once more. The novels of John Galt were always much to my taste. I fancy I have read every book that came from his pen, including his "Lives of the Players" ; and once every year I peruse "Sir Andrew Wyllie," also that most realistic production, the "Annals of the Parish" : both books undeserving of the neglect which has befallen them. As an apprentice I was a subscriber to the Mechanics' Library, from which I borrowed a great supply of books—my tastes lying largely in the direction of biography. The "Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties," notwithstanding the similar series of books of Mr. Smiles, is still worth the attention of young men in search of wholesome reading ; while "Cobbett's Advice" reads like a romance. Another book I read with much

zest was the autobiography of Lackington, the bookseller, a copy of which amusing and instructive work I still possess and read occasionally.

“Can you tell me,” I am sometimes asked, “how many booksellers’ apprentices have risen to eminence either as authors or as professional men?” but it is a question I am unable to answer. I do not myself know of any; and I have heard Mr. Tait say that, although some have ultimately acquired distinction as booksellers, he could not remember more than two (whom he did not name) who rose to fame in professional circles.

MR. TAIT AND HIS LITERARY AND POLITICAL FRIENDS

WILLIAM TAIT and *Tait's Magazine* were, from the year 1832 to 1846, known over the length and breadth of the land. Mr. Tait began business in company with his brother Charles (who had been apprenticed to Adam Black) several years before he began the issue of his magazine, but "C. B.," as he was called by his friends (his name was Charles Bertram Tait), left the bookselling business to be carried on by William, and started as an auctioneer in the same department as Scott's friend, John Ballantyne, namely, the disposal of books, pictures, *bric-à-brac* and wine. Mr. William Tait, although described by Mr. De Quincey as being "a patrician gentleman of potential aspect and distinctively conservative build," was an ardent reformer in politics, and had in his day figured as an "annuity-tax"

(church-rate) martyr. The politics of his magazine naturally reflected—and sometimes strongly—his own opinions as a philosophical radical, but, on the whole, it was more of a literary than a political organ. Its working genius was Mrs. Johnstone, a novelist and critic of some ability, who was also the author of the well-known cookery-book familiarly known as “Meg Dods”; while Mr. Tait conducted the necessary correspondence with the actual and would-be contributors. It was Mrs. Johnstone, however, who generally passed judgment on the articles offered, and she was herself a large contributor, both in fiction and criticism; many of the long and admirable reviews of important new books, for which the magazine was famous, coming from her pen. She also contributed every month the entire “Literary Register”—concise notices of current literature—which added considerably to her labours.

Mr. Johnstone, it was good-naturedly said, helped his wife—by handing her books of reference, and mending her pens; but this report was probably unfair to him, for he was

a clever man, and ably edited an abridgment of Dr. Jamieson's "Scottish Dictionary." He had been a schoolmaster, and Mrs. Johnstone one of his pupils; and they were a much-attached couple. *Tait* had a respectable staff of contributors, among whom I recall Lady Blessington; while (giving the *pas* to the ladies), Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Howitt, Miss Mitford, Miss Meteyard, and among the men, who were either on the staff or who wrote frequently in its pages, figured Edwin Chadwick, J. R. Chorley, John Galt, Sir William Molesworth, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, John Stuart Blackie, Dr. Bowring, Thomas De Quincey, W. Edmondstoune Aytoun, Theodore Martin, Joseph Hume, Richard Cobden, Ebenezer Elliott, David Vedder, William Howitt, John Banim, John Hill Burton, the Rev. Philip Harwood, two of whom, at least, Sir Theodore Martin and Professor Blackie, still live to enjoy the fame gained on this and other fields.

It has been often stated that Alexander Russel, the famous editor of *The Scotsman*, was a contributor to *Tait's Magazine*, but I believe his connection with it was confined to

one number, to which he supplied the article under the standing heading "Political Register," when the regular contributor responsible for that portion of the contents, Mr. J. J. Darling, W.S., was disabled by illness. When I was an apprentice to the publisher, Russel was a "reading-boy" at the printer's, Peter Brown. Russel was a couple of years or so my senior, but we struck up an acquaintance and used to talk a good deal about angling, which throughout life was his favourite pastime. The brilliant journalist of the future was indebted to Mr. Tait and to Mrs. Johnstone for his start as a newspaper editor; and after he had been for some time conducting provincial papers (at Berwick, Kilmarnock and Cupar Fife) it was Mr. Tait who recommended him to Mr. Charles MacLaren, the editor of *The Scotsman*, in the fortunes of which journal Russel was destined to play so brilliant a part. In those days of his apprenticeship, however, no one, so far as I know, anticipated the unsurpassed success which Russel attained as a journalist and editor.

One of the principal features of *Tait* was the annual "Feast of the Poets"; a collection of unused miscellaneous poems contributed to the magazine during the year and "saved" for the September number. I recollect on one occasion, near the date of the Feast, when Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe was calling on Mr. Tait, and had to wait for some little time as the master was engaged. At length Mr. Tait's visitor came forth, a man of meagre aspect, Mr. Sharpe, looking at him as he left the shop, said to Mr. Tait, "A poet, I think?" "Yes!" said the publisher. "Poor fellow," was the rejoinder, "he looks as if he were hungering for your Feast." Some of Mr. Tait's visitors among the poets would not from their appearance have excited commiseration. David Vedder, in particular, was a jolly-looking fellow, and there was one lady among the band of similar aspect.

II

A plan, not less judicious than praiseworthy, adopted by Mr. Tait was to encourage new writers of promise, and he was constantly on the outlook for such. In the early days of *Tait* magazine writers were not so numerous as they are to-day, nor could articles be obtained from so wide a circle. The Editor was therefore in the habit of reading every paper received in the hope of discovering a fresh hand who could be utilized. It was not in those days a custom for editors to communicate with all men of affairs who have made a name, and ask them to write papers for their periodicals on subjects on which they may or may not be authorities. That is a new fashion. Even now, there are, of course, exceptions to this mode of editing, and some editors are still at work who certainly peruse offered MSS. with ready attention. But in cases in which the proprietor edits his own magazine, no trouble, or, at any rate, not much, is taken to find new men, such as was taken by

Mr. Tait and Mr. Blackwood. There is a New Magazinish as well as a "New Journalism," and the good old-time "all-round" writer is now apt to be left out in the cold, the kind of "copy" he purveys not being much in favour with editors of the modern school. No sooner does some question force itself on the public notice, than those who have got it up, and some of those who have taken part in its agitation, are invited to discuss it in the reviews and magazines, and also in the pages of some of the many cheap popular periodicals. Those who pay the piper have of course the best right to call the tune. I (as a humble contributor of the old school) make no complaint; all I wish to do is to chronicle the changes that have taken place in literary fashions.

As to the amount of remuneration paid to general contributors at the present time, it is much the same, I fancy, as it was fifty years ago. Authors have no trade union, and never seem to strike for an increase of wages. Mr. Tait paid his contributors at the rate of fourteen guineas per sheet of sixteen pages—and capacious double-column, thousand-word pages,

they were—quotations included, when such were necessary to the article. Two or three writers were rewarded more liberally, such as Mr. De Quincey and Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, the latter receiving twenty guineas for his sketch of the "Eglington Tournament" (twenty pages-long), and he was paid, I think, at the same rate for two or three other papers. Mrs. Johnstone, as working editor, received monthly a sum of twenty pounds for her writings and her literary supervision.

As to the present-day rates paid by magazines, I have in my possession an offer from one of them, proposing that the writer (a specialist) of a pretty long paper on an important subject should accept fifty copies of the magazine (a somewhat pretentious shilling one) as a quittance for his article. Another shilling periodical offered at the rate of five shillings a page for good matter, a market for which was ultimately found at four times that rate. There are certain periodicals which offer a guinea to any person who will steal a suitable story for them, but they give nothing at all to the author of the stolen goods. There are

periodicals, too, which make a great parade of the high rate they pay for "original" matter, but as they seem very rarely to contain any, the bank account of the proprietors does not suffer seriously.

III

Sometimes an offered contribution acquired an interest apart from its literary quality. I remember one which had a tragedy connected with it. A young woman came one day to the office, bringing with her a long ballad of her own composition. She inquired eagerly if she could see Mr. Tait, but he was far away from home at the time. On being told so the poor woman was much distressed, and with tears in her eyes was turning towards the door. "Can I do anything for you?" I asked, and heard a pitiful tale. Her father had died suddenly that morning, her mother was ill and confined to bed, while her only brother was in the West Indies. She sometimes wrote verses, and several pieces from her pen, she told me, had appeared in the newspapers. "And this is a long ballad story—there are a hundred verses

—I wanted to show Mr. Tait, in the hope that he would put it in his magazine, as we have no money to pay for my father's funeral; I am a white-seam sewer to business, but father's illness has taken all our money, and we have nothing in house." I tried, but in rather a lame fashion I fear, to comfort her. The young woman handed me the MS., and it happily occurred to me that I might raise a little money for her, for I could not help believing her story, and, going at once into the printing-office, I got a few verses of the ballad put into type. "It's not bad, really," was the verdict of Mr. McPhail, the overseer, "*it clicks!*" I then told him the girl's story, and having communicated with the "father of the chapel," the speedy result was a subscription of twenty-three shillings, which was made up by the overseer and myself to two pounds. I at once got another pound from Mr. Tait's next-door neighbour, and I ventured on the Magazine's account to add another, in the hope that the poem might be used. Mr. McPhail kindly undertook to carry the money to the mother and daughter (I had told the girl that we would

send to her), to whom his feet no doubt were beautiful as he crossed their threshold. A respectable funeral (always a matter of importance to the humbler classes in Scotland) was the result ; and although Mrs. Johnstone did not find the poem to be up to the mark, Mr. Tait was not displeased at what had been done, and returned the MS., in person, to its author, with kind words and, I have little doubt, with another pound-note.

That is rather a long story. Here is a shorter one. One day there came bustling into the shop an excited Irishman, to ask for the editor ; he, too, had a bundle of MS.

" I'm a comedian, sir, and I'm out of an engagement. Here are half-a-dozen excellent original Irish stories. I don't ask you to read them off-hand, but they are good enough, I can tell you. What I want, Mr. Tait, is a couple of pounds to take me to Liverpool, where there is a place in the theatre ready for me."

After some further explanations the man got what he asked, but his stories were found to be impudent plagiarisms and paraphrases from the works of Mrs. S. C. Hall.

Incidents of this kind were of almost frequent occurrence ; people would bring forged letters of introduction, and although Mr. Tait was a very shrewd man, and not easily moved, he was occasionally taken in by adventurers.

A man who personated one of the poets of "the Feast," obtained a pound by telling a dismal story of misfortune. Success suggested another visit in the course of ten days, but in the meantime he had been found out, and when Mr. Tait saw him, he whispered to one of the boys to "go for a policeman."

The man, who evidently heard what was said, bolted, and so quickly that we failed to stop him. Another trick was successfully played on Mr. Tait by a lady, who persuaded Mrs. Johnstone to accept (immediate payment being wanted, of course), four or five poems from the pen of "L. E. L.," who had died a few months previously at Cape Coast Castle in Africa. Suspicion having been somehow excited, inquiry was made, and the poems were found to be forgeries ; but two guineas were gone for ever.

IV

Mr. Tait always acted most honourably to his authors. His system of accounting to them was usually on the plan of his taking all the risk, and giving the writers half the profits; the accounts being invariably stated with accuracy and simplicity, and no "commissions" added. I remember one book in which Mr. Tait speculated on his own account—a "History of Scotland," for which he gave the author a hundred pounds. I "subscribed" that book round the trade, but did not get even a single order, and I do not think a copy of it was ever sold. That, so far as I know, was Mr. Tait's worst publishing adventure; the majority of the works published by him proving successful, some of them remarkably so, especially the "History of Scotland," by Mr. Patrick Fraser Tytler. It was originally published at the rate of twelve shillings per volume, but an edition at half that price followed and met with ready sale, the number taken by the Edinburgh trade, when it was subscribed, being

no less than 184 copies, which was considered to be a great success in those days.

By arrangement with Dr. Bowring, the literary executor of Jeremy Bentham, Mr. Tait published a collected edition of that eminent philosopher's works, the local editor being Mr. John Hill Burton, who wrote for Mr. Tait the "Life of David Hume." He is best known by his delightful "Book Hunter," and by his "History of Scotland," both published by Messrs. Blackwood. Mr. Burton is believed to have officiated occasionally as editor of the *Scotsman*, in the absence of Mr. Russel, and some wild stories are told of the attempt he made to introduce certain personal crotchets into the columns of that journal.

It was a standing advice given by Mr. Tait to all authors—I have heard him give it again and again—never to publish a book at their own cost. "If a publisher thinks it won't pay him to take it up, and run the risk of paper, printing, and binding," he would say, "depend upon it, it won't be worth *your* while to do so." Another leading idea of Mr. Tait's was that "it never pays to publish pamphlets or

poetry. Whenever I have done so," he remarked, "the result has almost invariably been a loss." And yet he was publisher of two or three pamphlets which for a time were in great demand, although they may not have brought much money to the till. Two of these, "Russia," and "England, Ireland, and America," were written by Richard Cobden, under the pseudonym "A Manchester Manufacturer."

Two rather successful books of poems were published by Mr. Tait—a popular edition of the works—undeservedly neglected now-a-days—of Ebenezer Elliott, the "Corn Law Rhymer," whose writings the publisher much admired; and the poems of Robert Nicoll, a man in whom both Mrs. Johnstone and Mr. Tait took much interest. By the influence of the latter, Nicoll, who was an ardent Radical, was, in 1836, appointed editor of the *Leeds Times*, a position he was not long destined to occupy, for he died of consumption a year after, at the age of twenty-three. He is forgotten now, but Mrs. Johnstone, who wrote a sketch of his life to precede his poems, spoke of him

as "Scotland's second Burns." *Apropos* to the publication of poetry, Mr. Tait was of opinion that the various "Feasts of the Poets" which had appeared in his magazine would form a splendid volume. "Why not publish it then?" I ventured to say, but all the answer I received was an ominous shake of the head. As regards the "Feast," many of the younger poets and poetesses used to call and ask me eagerly if I knew if their poem would be "in"; and sometimes, having seen the proofs, I was able to send them away happy.

In this connection I remember an amusing adventure. One day, Mr. Tait's premises (then at 107 Princes Street) were invaded by a family consisting of father, mother, son, and two daughters, bearing a ponderous manuscript volume of poems "all written by ourselves," as the mother said, in a joyous key. If my memory serves me, the title proposed for the volume was, "A Poem for Every Day in the Year and Two for Sundays, by Mr. and Mrs. Mullingar and their sons and daughters." Mr. Tait was nonplussed by the invaders; the mother seemed inclined to sit down and await

his decision, whilst one of the daughters offered to recite "The First Friday," one of the longest pieces in the collection.

An important visitor opportunely arriving, my employer released himself and the poetical family retired, promising to return. When they did so, the publisher was "not at home," and I was taken into the confidence of Mrs. Mullingar, whom I assured, putting on my best air of wisdom, that poetry never paid.

"And yet," said the lady, in a reproachful tone, "Sir Walter Scott made thousands of pounds by his poems." "Yes, and so did Byron and Moore," chimed in one of the daughters, with a severe look, "and other poets too,—look at Rogers!"

It was in vain that I said these were exceptional instances. Mrs. Mullingar was confident *their* book would sell; and I only got out of the scrape at length by suggesting, that as Mr. Tait was unwilling to publish books of poetry, they should try Mr. Blackwood, and directed the family to 45, George Street. The result I never heard.

Many similar occurrences might be related,

such as the story of a clergyman who wanted "Fifty-two sermons which I intend to preach," published "at once." It was suggested to his reverence that it would be better to preach first and publish afterwards, but that was a plan he would not listen to. "I desire," he said, "to excite curiosity, so as to sell the book ; it is sure to go, as I have a name, you know." Other ministers there were who visited us with extraordinary projects ; one, for instance, with a suggestion that he should contribute a "lay sermon" every month to the magazine. Another proposed to give portraits and memoirs of popular preachers, which he was certain would hit the taste of the magazine readers. A very decided negative had to be given to these, and to a hundred other eccentric projects.

V


In course of time, when I had become of some authority in connection with Mr. Tait's business, having risen to be a manager (or rather, as the position was called, "head-clerk"),

I had allotted to me a good many of the "disagreeables" which attended the business, Mr. Tait being a bad hand at refusals. When (at my suggestion) he published in serial form the "Edinburgh Tales" he was inundated with offers of stories, most of the authors who brought their contributions being handed over to me to deal with in the first instance. Many were amusing, but most were merely troublesome; and, of the ladies, the majority would insist on my hearing them read their stories. It was in vain that I told them I was busy, and that my approval would not influence the editor. "But I thought you would be the editor; I'm sure you look like an editor," was in one instance the diplomatic reply. "Leave your story and I will send it to the proper person," I would sternly answer. "Oh, very well, shall I come back early to-morrow afternoon to hear what he says?" and, "Oh! by the bye, when will the payment be made?" was not an infrequent winding up of such colloquies.

One person was even more pertinacious than most, coming again and again, insisting on

an interview with Mr. Tait, and declining to mention the nature of his business to me. Ultimately he was ushered into the sanctum. He had called, he said, to make a valuable suggestion—a suggestion, indeed, that was worth “a gude wheen bawbees” (a good deal of money); and when the publisher assured him that, if his suggestion were adopted, he would certainly be paid for it, he opened out; but it was the old story of the mountain and the mouse. The suggestion was worthless, and we learned afterwards that the man was a harmless lunatic. But there were worse persons about than harmless lunatics and pertinacious incompetents. A story was accepted and had been put in type before it was discovered that it had been stolen bodily from an early number of the magazine, the title only being original.

Coming back to some of the celebrities with whom Mr. Tait had relations, I may name “The Ettrick Shepherd,” who had, I believe, proposed some scheme of “Tales” for publication. He was always spoken of in a kindly way in the warehouse, and Lockhart’s picture




of him, as delineated in the "Life of Scott," was much resented by Mrs. Johnstone, and also by Mr. Tait, and many of their literary friends. Mrs. Johnstone, who usually spent a month every summer in the Shepherd's country, always came back with something new to tell about him, having, during her holiday, enjoyed the opportunity of conversing with many of his friends and acquaintances.

In Mr. Tait's warehouse I read Hogg's "Shepherd's Calendar," and some of his poems also, while I had, at various times, many opportunities of hearing much about him. He seemed to have been "everybody's body and nobody's enemy but his own"; "hail fellow, well met," not only at the Candlemaker Row festival, an annual social meeting of which he was the lion, but everywhere else, and was well able—too well able sometimes, perhaps—to hold his own in any grade of society. Not a few of "the trade" had come in contact with him, and these, I found, always spoke kindly of him. "Willie" Wilson described Hogg as "a genial man with far more in him than ever came out."

Thomas Carlyle was one of our heroes. Mr.

Tait had published his "Specimens of German Romance," and reminiscences of the translator were floating about in Edinburgh literary circles. In 1837 Mr. Carlyle was not the great man he afterwards became ; but that some of Mr. Tait's assistants evidently anticipated his fame is certain, as all of his letters which had been preserved were minus the signature. I took pains one day to look over the whole of them, and was unable to find one that had not been mutilated. It was in Mr. Tait's warehouse that the late Mr. W. F. Watson, who had been one of the assistants, began his famous collection of autographs and portraits, and doubtless he had exacted tribute from the Carlyle letters ; some of the more interesting ones, as Mr. Tait told me, having gone amissing entire. The letters of some others of Mr. Tait's correspondents of celebrity had also been mutilated in the same manner as those of Carlyle, particularly those of Lord Brougham. May I hope to be excused for mentioning here that I first saw the great Thomas when I was a child attending the parish school at Haddington ? He was an old friend of our Mr. Johnstone,



and one day called at the school and carried off the master, thereby producing an afternoon's play, for which he was greatly blessed by both girls and boys.

Sir Edwin Chadwick having recently paid the debt of nature, the only contributors to *Tait* of any celebrity now living, so far as I know, are Professor Blackie and Sir Theodore Martin. The latter, since the days of the "Bon Gaultier Ballads," has made a new name in English literature. On some occasions I had to speed with proofs to Mr. Martin's lodgings. Some of his prose papers as well as poems were produced in collaboration with Mr. Aytoun, and they attracted a considerable amount of attention. In "Gabriel Garbage," in the "Confessions of a Monomaniac," and in the various parodies of the poetical puffing school, there was sometimes wit, sometimes "wut," and always plenty of rollicking humour.

It forms no part of the plan of these reminiscences to give "specimens of authors," otherwise I might have culled, for the benefit of my readers, not a few of the things which used to sparkle in *Tait*. It might be said

that Mr. Martin did some of his wooing in the pages of *Tait's Magazine*, to which he contributed many verses such as these—addressed to the most charming “Juliet” and “Rosalind” of her generation :—

“I have been wandering in enchanted ground,
The slave and subject, lady, of thy spell ;
I heard thy voice, and straightway all around
Became transformed, yet how I could not tell.”—

and those which began—

“Blessings on the glorious spirit lies in poesy divine !
Blessings, lady, on the magic of that wondrous power of
thine.”

Another of Mr. Martin's amusements of those days was to help the manager of the theatre to compose those enjoyable “Farewell Addresses” which were always looked for as a *bonne bouche* at the close of each theatrical season. They purported to epitomize the fortunes of the theatre, and when the comedians had been playing to a beggarly show of empty boxes, the manager used to plead for the sympathies of his audience. Once, the “Address” took the form of a parody of

"The Burial of Sir John Moore," of which all but this has faded from my memory :—

"Not a guinea remained, nor a one-pound note,
As my stars to their carriages hurried,
Nor left me in pity, a farewell shot,
In the locker where my hopes lay buried.
Slowly and sadly I sat me down,
With my hand on my upper story,
And I thought as I pressed my only crown,
That cash was better than glory."

VI

Mr. George Combe was a constant reader (I think he had been at one time a contributor) of *Tait's Magazine*, which I used to leave regularly at his house, and occasionally he would look in to see Mr. Tait; but I do not think they very much cared for each other—never hitting it off about Phrenology—and when Mr. Combe published his "Travels in America," a copy was not sent to *Tait* for review until it was formally asked for. Mr. Combe, as I have heard him say, had had a great and long struggle to obtain a position in

Edinburgh society, being obnoxious as an "atheist," a word to which he felt a strong objection. But Mr. Combe soon organized an excellent business as "Writer to the Signet," and in time his works came to be much esteemed and in great demand. Many a parcel of his "Constitution of Man" did I carry in 1837 to 1840 from the publishers on the South Bridge to Mr. Tait's warehouse in Princes Street. Mr. Combe (of whom there is much to be found in the "Recollections" of Mrs. Fanny Kemble) married Cecilia, a niece of the great Mrs. Siddons, and it is said that a clause in their marriage contract provided that he would "become a hearer in any church where she could find the most sense, and the least doctrine preached." St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where the chief preacher was Bishop Terret, was selected.

Mr. George Thomson, the correspondent of Burns, was a frequent and much-cherished visitor of Mr. Tait, and a guest at his musical parties. Mr. Thomson, when I used to be sent with notes or messages to him, was an official—senior clerk, I think—in the office of the

“Board of Trustees for Manufactures,” then in George Street, his dwelling-house being situated in the west end of Queen Street. Mr. Thomson, about 1837-8, was hale and hearty, though he had seen some eighty summers. It was more from his connection with Robert Burns, than from his eminence as a musician and composer, that Mr. Thomson was famous in Edinburgh. It had been persistently stated that he had acted shabbily in his transactions with Burns and with the poet's family after his death, which accusation Mr. Thomson as persistently denied. The controversy was settled by an investigation, in which Mr. Tait among others took part. They were convinced that Mr. Thomson had throughout his connection with the poet, and afterwards with the representatives of the poet's family, behaved in the most honourable manner. As this opinion was largely shared by their fellow-citizens, Mr. Thomson was entertained at a public banquet, presided over by Lord Cockburn, and presented with a silver vase subscribed for by a hundred of his friends.

I pass over two distinguished contributors

to *Tait* whom I never saw, Miss Mitford and John Galt. Of another at least as brilliant, and whom I have often seen—Professor Blackie—then a young man, and almost as active as now, what could I say which is not well known already, save that the chief of his early contributions to the magazine was a series of very free translations of the “Bürschen Melodies,” with the music? There arose a difficulty about interweaving the musical notation with the words, which was happily solved by my unearthing a compositor who could set up movable musical notes, so as to represent any tune that was necessary for the illustration of the Professor’s articles. I do not propose to say more of the Professor here, or to allude to the versatile doings of his latter years, which are sufficiently chronicled in the newspapers of the day. Two of his public or, in one instance, semi-public appearances, are well within my recollection,—his argument with Mr. Ernest Jones about the People’s Charter, and the lament he uttered at one of Miss Catherine Sinclair’s “Ulster Hall” parties, at his lack of sufficient moral courage to appear in other

than the conventional evening costume which he disliked and despised. Through good and through evil report, Professor Blackie has never ceased to be himself. All that he has said or done has been "characteristic."

Mr. Tait was an ardent admirer of Lord Brougham, and took advantage of every occasion that offered to do him honour before the world. Many letters passed between them. Mr. Tait possessed the happy knack of eliciting from Lord Brougham important statements of opinion—statements that at the time attracted public attention in no mean degree. Some people of those days used to put it in another way—declaring that when the statesman had something special to say, Mr. Tait received a hint to provide the machinery for the utterance. This may have been the case; if so, no very heinous sin was committed, as, at the time, the public thought every utterance that came in from Lord Brougham worthy of attention.

My memory reverts to one occasion (September 1838) upon which Mr. Tait became the means of eliciting a long letter on political affairs from Lord Brougham. It came in the

form of an answer to a letter asking if a rumour of his Lordship's intention to visit Scotland was true, and that, if so, a political demonstration might be organized. Mr. Tait, I remember, was well pleased with the letter, of which he desired me to make several copies to send to newspapers, and with one part of it in particular, which impressed upon "the people" that it was only by means of their own efforts they could ever hope to work out their political salvation.

Another of Mr. Tait's favourite political writers and parliamentary hands was Mr. J. A. Roebuck, the "Tear 'em" of after days, who frequently contributed political papers to the magazine, and corresponded with its editor on the affairs of the nation. I was able to note that some of the "copy" sent by Mr. Roebuck was deemed rather too fierce even for *Tait*, although when occasion served the magazine was not afraid to speak out. Its fulminations were, in its early days, directed more against the Whigs than the Tories, for Mr. Tait entertained a dislike of "Whiggery," and went so far in evincing his antipathy to the party

that he refused to dine with several of its members, whom he privately esteemed, lest it might be thought he was changing his coat.

"Johnny Lawson, Portioner of Penicuick," a character of the period of which I am writing, was an ardent reformer and a constant caller on Mr. Tait. Upon the occasion of his visits he criticized with great vigour the contents of the magazine, and was usually able to place his finger on some weak point in the political armour. He always became prominent at election times. When a county contest (Midlothian) came on, he would walk from Penicuick to Edinburgh, a distance of nine miles, bare-foot, carrying a red umbrella ; and never failed to make his appearance on the hustings or to give the Tory candidate a "heckling."

I remained in the service of Mr. Tait till he retired from business, when I was sold, along with the magazine, to a Glasgow firm, of which Mr. George Troup was the managing member. A Mr. Alison, I believe, supplied the funds for the purchase of *Tait*, and acquired the house in Dunlop Street, next door to the Theatre Royal, where it was published. *Tait* did not

live long after being transferred to Glasgow. Mr. Troup, a most excellent person, elected to be his own editor, and imposed upon himself far too much work, being at the time an active contributor to a Belfast and a Montrose newspaper, to both of which he supplied leading articles. Mr. Troup, at one period, acted as an assistant in Mr. Tait's warehouse in Edinburgh, and was the projector of the *North British Mail*, of which Glasgow journal I wrote, as an advertisement for insertion in the *Glasgow Herald*, the first announcement of its being about to appear. It has been ever since a leading journal in the West of Scotland.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

MR. DE QUINCEY was resident in Edinburgh, and busily at work, long before I knew about him. I had, indeed, heard some talk of the "English Opium-Eater" in a library which I frequented as a boy, but not being interested, paid little attention to what was said. When, however, I came within the precincts of "the trade," it was different. His name was then prominent in *Tait* and *Blackwood*, and in all literary circles; and looking over some back numbers of the magazines, I found many of his articles; but on trying to read them I felt that they were above me, although in due course of time they afforded me a great amount of pleasure.

The publisher of *Tait* (as also Mrs. Johnstone) entertained a high opinion of Mr. De Quincey's ability as a contributor, and on the

occasion of his visits to the warehouse, treated him with a certain degree of deference. For the numbers of *Tait* containing his sketches there was usually a brisk demand. At one time, when a large quantity of old numbers of the magazine was disposed of to Messrs. Chidley, the waste-paper merchants, twenty-five sets of those containing Mr. De Quincey's articles were reserved to supply further demand.

It was the personality of the man, however, which led to most discussion among my shop-mates. His packets of "copy" often reached Tait's in a most extraordinary fashion. Sometimes a young woman would enter the shop in the morning, whilst I was busy sweeping or dusting, and throwing down a roll of paper, with an exclamation of "There!" would rush off as abruptly as she had entered. On examining the roll, I would find it addressed in the neatest of handwriting to, "William Tait, Esquire." On more than one occasion a night policeman arrived early in the afternoon with a similar packet, for which he demanded and received a shilling; a coin destined to be

divided into three parts, the packet having passed through as many pairs of hands.

"Who gave you this?" I once heard Mr. Tait ask.

"It was my neighbour, sir, at the North Bridge."

"And who gave it to him?"

"It was his neighbour, sir."

"And where did he get it?"

"Oh, he got it from the little man, sir, that makes the fine speeches and lives down yonder, sir," was the reply.

It is surprising that none of Mr. De Quincey's copy was lost in transmission; but what he sent, no matter how he sent it, always came to hand; at least, I never knew of any parcel that failed to reach the editor. On one occasion a hackney-coachman had been requisitioned as messenger; he was driving a party to visit Holyrood Palace, and whilst the company were engaged in viewing the old abbey "a little gentleman, as polite as a prince, although he wasn't dressed like one, gave me this to bring here, and he said I would get a shilling for my trouble." So said the cabman.

There should be a considerable number of Mr. De Quincey's unpublished articles in existence, somewhere, because he wrote much manuscript that was never printed. I am writing of what I know, when I say there would be, in the year 1844-5, ten or twelve papers in Mr. Tait's possession that had not been used. These were broken-off "continuations," and other contributions laid aside to be used when opportunity should offer. Whether these were transferred 'along with the magazine to Mr. George Troup of Glasgow, or retained by Mr. Tait, or returned to the author, I am unable at this distance of time to remember, but I know that the English Opium-Eater was seized with extraordinary fits of industry; on such occasions the copy would come pouring in hot from his pen, as many, sometimes, as two instalments within a week. Nothing received was returned, but Mrs. Johnstone thought it unadvisable to insert an article from the "Opium-Eater's" pen in every number of the magazine: to publish so many, she feared, might render his communications commonplace.

At other times Mr. De Quincey would be

his own messenger, and appear at Mr. Tait's shop laden with copy, which he would timidly lay down on the table, and then explain what it was about, talking another essay in the course of the explanation. I remember the master saying once, after De Quincey had left, and he had taken a glance at the MS., "It's very good, but not quite so good as his talk about it."

One evening Mr. De Quincey made his appearance at a public-house which adjoined the shop, and begged the landlord to take charge of a parcel of loose sheets of copy and to give it to Mr. Tait himself in the course of next day. "I ask this favour of you," said the Opium-Eater, "as that gentleman's place of business is closed. I had hoped to be here two hours ago, but have been unexpectedly detained by holding a prolonged conversation with a talkative friend." One more illustration of how Mr. De Quincey's articles reached the editor may be given. I heard it told by the messenger, who was at the time a young actor of the Edinburgh dramatic company.

"I was away down in the Hunter's Bog—a

place in the Queen's Park—practising a back-fall which I had to do on the stage ; after I had tried it a few times against an incline of the hill, a little gentleman, with really quite a divine face, whom I had not before noticed, came forward and spoke to me in a very polite manner. 'I think you will do it very effectively,' he said, 'but you must guard your head properly, otherwise you might give it a bad knock on the boards ; the stage, as I venture to hope you are aware, is so different from this soft substance.'

"I was quite struck with the politeness of the little man, and more so when he continued : 'If, on your way to the theatre, you will be so good as accompany me to where I am living, I shall be much pleased if you give me your permission to offer you, what I am sure you require, a little refreshment.' Well, when we got to his lodgings, the servant on seeing him at once burst out with, 'Oh ! Mr. De Quincey, there is a gentleman gone into the Park to look for you ; I told him he would fall in with you either about the Wells O'Weary or just below Samson Ribs.' By this time we were

in the gentleman's room, and he said, ' This is an excellent spirit which I sometimes partake of, but in strict moderation ; pray forgive my not being able to offer it to you in a glass ; this, I may be excused for saying, is not my own house, and I have no wish to trouble the servant or Miss Miller, this earthenware vessel is quite clean—permit me '—and so saying, he poured out about half a teacupful of brandy and filled up the vessel with water. ' You will find it excellent,' he observed, as he did so. As soon as I heard the servant mention his name I knew my man, he was the ' English Opium-Eater,' and I was proud of his attention, for I had read his ' Confessions.' Now, to make a long story short, Mr. De Quincey wound up by asking me, ' if I would do him the great favour to carry up to town with me a small packet of much value, and have it sent to Mr. Tait's place of business, at 78, Princes Street, by a chair-man from the Register House, who would be paid by that gentleman or one of his servants. Circumstances over which I have no control,' continued Mr. De Quincey, ' and into which I need not enter, nor do I

consider they would be of interest to you, preclude my going up to town for a few days.' I told Mr. De Quincey I would be only too happy to deliver the packet with my own hands, and so I did, I assure you, and was proud to oblige such a great man ; of course I comprehended the situation at once—the Opium-Eater was living 'in sanctuary.' "

Mr. De Quincey did not always manage his money matters very judiciously, and when it was first my happiness to come into contact with him, he was, as my actor-friend expressed it, "in sanctuary" at Holyrood—then, and for long before and after, the equivalent in Scotland of "the Fleet" in London. Under these circumstances, Mr. De Quincey occupied rooms in the lodging-house kept by a Miss Miller, in a building near the Abbey, which has now disappeared ; and during my apprenticeship I was occasionally sent thither with proofs or money for the distinguished contributor.

Those residing in "the precincts" had a very large run of liberty ground. On Sundays the dwellers were free to leave it for the day,

but as they included all sorts of characters, on the Sunday nights exciting scenes occasionally took place at the "Abbey Strand," where the precincts began. Many who had been beguiled by the hospitality of their friends forgot the hour at which Sunday terminated, and had frequently an anxious chase for their liberty, "jumping the strand" sometimes as the clock began to strike twelve, to escape the attentions of the sheriffs' officers in waiting.

On my first visit, I carried a proof, and a letter containing a bank-note for five pounds. It was late in the afternoon of a gloomy November day, when I started to walk to the Abbey; the day, I can remember, had been bitterly cold, heavy showers of sleet and snow having fallen at intervals, and in the gloaming the grey old Canongate did not certainly look its best. The house I was in search of was easily found. In addition to Miss Miller's, there were probably half a dozen similar lodging-houses within the Abbey precincts, but it seemed better known than the others. I was at once shown to a room where I found Mr. De Quincey sitting, wrapped in an old

camlet cloak, cowering over the remains of what, judging by a liberal display of ashes, had been originally a good fire. The Opium-Eater, who had a strikingly beautiful face, looked pale and fragile, and no one seeing him would have supposed that he had still two-and-twenty years to live. Shortly before my visit Mrs. De Quincey had died, and his bereavement was, as I heard him say to Mr. Tait, "a source of ever-present grief to him."

He looked sad and pre-occupied, but received me with that gentle courtesy which never failed, and which was native to him; and which, to a message-boy, often receiving pretty brusque treatment, was peculiarly grateful. I noticed that of the two letters which I had placed in his hand he turned first to that containing the proof, glancing over it for perhaps a minute or so. Then observing that I was standing, cap in hand, he apologized and begged me (in a long fine-drawn sentence) to be seated whilst he replied to Mr. Tait. He then broke the seal of the other letter, which contained the money, and this, as it seemed to me, he examined somewhat curiously. Rising

from his chair, he said, "This is a somewhat embarrassing sum of money for me to have here. Might I request you—there is a place of entertainment, a public-house, almost at the door—to have the kindness to go there and ask the lady who keeps it to give you money of lesser amounts for this note; I shall be extremely obliged to you if you will take this trouble, and, if at the same time you will be good enough to ask the servant of the establishment to send me a small supply of the excellent brandy which is kept there, you will still further oblige me."

These messages were executed at once, and on my return with the change I was thanked by the distinguished author in a most gracious way, and after sitting for about half an hour—during which he wrote a letter to Mr. Tait in his beautiful handwriting, and with the blue ink, which he explained to me was "much more fluid than any other"—I was politely dismissed, with an expression of his regret at not being able to invite me to partake of any refreshment. "I would offer you tea, but

such," he added, "cannot be had here without very much trouble."


Characteristically enough, the letter which Mr. De Quincey gave me contained no acknowledgment of the money sent to him, but was entirely taken up with matters pertaining to an article on (I think) Greek literature. As a matter of business, a formal acknowledgment was asked for by letter, and to that letter came a verbal answer, brought by Miss Miller, to the effect that "the young gentleman who had been so kind as to bring him the money would be able to assure Mr. Tait that it had been received." Mr. Tait was much amused, and Miss Miller said, "Oh, it's so like him." The Opium-Eater, as I have said, was exceedingly careless in money matters, and preferred to be paid by occasional small instalments. Once, when a cheque for a very moderate sum was sent to him, a messenger brought it back to Mr. Tait with the intimation that at the moment "so large an amount was not required by him, two pounds being all he wanted."

When I had made a few visits to him, Mr. De Quincey was so kind as to take some



particular notice of me ; and afterwards when he wrote his Grasmere article about "George and Sarah Green" (1839), he spoke to me of the subject, and read me a passage from the proof before it appeared in *Tait*. Mr. De Quincey occasionally made his appearance at the warehouse of Mr. Tait, where he would sometimes be asked to dinner, for which some special light dishes had to be provided for him, as he was unable to partake of ordinary fare. On these rare occasions, when Mr. Tait could prevail on Mr. De Quincey to be entertained, I was sent to the master's residence to inform the house-keeper, so that she might make some special preparations ; but on one inconvenient occasion Mr. De Quincey invited himself. Mr. Tait had asked a friend, well known for his love of the good things of this life, to dine with him, and before leaving in the morning told his housekeeper, who also officiated as his cook, to be sure to have something nice for them. About one o'clock, however, Mr. De Quincey arrived at Walker Street, and told the housekeeper, who was a new hand, and did not know him, that he

would stay to dinner. Thinking he was the expected guest, she said, "Oh yes, sir, I know, I'm just going to send out for a gigot of black-faced mutton and a moorfowl ; dinner is to be at five o'clock. "Pardon me, madam," said the ever-courteous Opium-Eater, "the state of my stomach, which I may tell you is a perpetual source of woe to me, will prevent my eating flesh-meats of the kind you mention. If, therefore, you could procure a portion of tripe, and stew it for me, as also a pudding of the batter or custard kind, I should indeed be grateful to you." The housekeeper, knowing that her master would be perfectly satisfied with the cold roast-beef stored in her larder, acted at once on Mr. De Quincey's suggestion, and procured the wished-for dish of tripe instead of the mutton and the game, wondering much at the exceeding politeness of the gentleman, whom she had never seen before. Mr. Tait and his guest duly arrived ; he was not a little surprised at finding Mr. De Quincey comfortably seated in his drawing-room, reading a proof, and laughed heartily when the housekeeper mentioned what had occurred.



The Opium-Eater gave an elaborate explanation ; but the guest who expected to “dine” was not appeased until he found that the talk of De Quincey made ample amends for the loss of his dinner.

Mr. De Quincey was wont to frequent a small hotel called the “Guildford Arms,” in Register Street (situated near the renowned tavern which was the scene of the “Noctes Ambrosianæ,” in Gabriel’s Road), in search of his favourite tripe ; and it was one of the places in which Mr. De Quincey was occasionally pleased to hide himself.

One of the numerous “warehouse stories” about the English Opium-Eater may be worth repeating, although the circumstances occurred before my day. It was told me by my fellow-apprentice, who one morning upon his arrival at the shop to open it found a “noddy” (a one-horse hackney-carriage) standing before the door with the blinds down. After a few minutes had elapsed the occupant contrived to attract the attention of George, and blandly addressed him somewhat in this fashion :—

“I am Mr. De Quincey, and I presume that

you are one of the young gentlemen who assist Mr. Tait in conducting his business. I am at the moment much embarrassed for want of a sum of money ; the difficulty will not, however, I can assure you, be permanent, but it is in the meantime most urgent, and I fancied that even at this early hour I should be able to obtain the required amount by coming here." George thought he might be wanting a five-pound note at least, so he said to him anxiously—"How much do you require, Mr. De Quincey?" "You see, young sir, in arriving at my journey's end I shall require to pay the coachman his fare, including a small gratuity to himself, not less than three shillings in all, and having but half-a-crown in my pocket, I am anxious to be accommodated with the loan of sixpence!" Not less astonished than relieved, George handed the coin to him at once, and after thanking his benefactor profusely for his great politeness, Mr. De Quincey drove off.

I now take leave of the English Opium-Eater, the chief features of his life being well known. Owing to his kindness our acquaintance ripened, and in after days, both during the

period of his contributions to *Tait*, and also while his papers were appearing in *Hogg's Instructor*, to which periodical I was myself a contributor, we had many conversations. Often in Princes Street, of an evening, if the street was not thronged, he would take a turn or two with me, speaking his beautiful English, and talking to me in his engaging voice (as if I had been in all respects his equal) upon literary subjects, his information seeming to be boundless. I shall never forget one of those evenings he allowed me to walk with him, an evening when he spoke of Joan of Arc, a favourite theme on which he contributed a paper to *Tait's Magazine*. No feature of Mr. De Quincey's character was more marked, perhaps, than his evident desire to put his inferiors on a footing of perfect equality. He did all the talking, but he talked in such a way as to inform, but never to make you feel your ignorance. Such, at all events, was my experience of this remarkable man.

When in Edinburgh I frequently visit his grave, and I replied to some remarks made recently in several newspapers as follows :—

“Those admirers of the writings of the English Opium-Eater, who a little time ago were complaining about the neglect of his grave, will find, if they visit the place, that a few flowers have been planted and its general condition improved. It is quite a mistake to suppose, as was recently stated, that no head-stone marks the place of interment of the brilliant essayist. There is one on which the following inscription has been engraved :—

Sacred
To the Memory of
THOMAS DE QUINCEY,
Who was born at Greenhay,
Near Manchester,
August 15th, 1785,
And died in Edinburgh
December 8th, 1859.—
And of MARGARET, his Wife,
Who died
August 7th, 1837.

“De Quincey’s grave is in the churchyard of St. Cuthbert’s, in the Lothian Road, and is situated at the side of a wall in a picturesque nook, not far from the entrance. A pathway, the second on the right-hand side of the main

avenue, leads to it." I may add here that Mr. J. R. Findlay, of the *Scotsman*, has affixed a memorial plate to the front of the house, 42, Lothian Street, which was often Mr. De Quincey's home :—

THOMAS DE QUINCEY :

Prose Writer : Born 1785 : Died 1859 :

Lived here.

“THE TRADE” IN 1837-38

I

WHEN I went to business in 1837, Archibald Constable had been dead ten years, but there were then living not a few who had known him, and who spoke of him with great respect, none more highly than those who had been in his employment. All spoke of Mr. Constable as king among book-merchants, who administered an immense establishment, the like of which, they believed, would never again be seen in Edinburgh. In 1837 the only publishing houses in existence which had done business with Sir Walter Scott were William Blackwood & Sons, and Robert Cadell, the latter having been a partner in the house of Constable & Co., and chosen by Sir Walter Scott to continue the publication of his novels and other works.

In his diary Sir Walter, who had been visited by Mr. Cadell during one of the most exciting times of the commercial crisis of 1825-6, thus speaks of his visitor: (Dec. 18, 1825) "Cadell came at eight to communicate a letter from Hurst & Robinson intimating they had stood the storm. . . . I shall always think the better of Cadell for this—not merely because 'his feet are beautiful on the mountains who bring good tidings,' but because he showed feeling—deep feeling, poor fellow—he who I thought had no more than his numeration table, and who, if he had had his whole counting-house full of sensibility, had yet his wife and children to bestow it upon—I will not forget this if I get through. I love the virtues of rough and round men—the others are apt to escape in salt rheum, sal volatile, and a white pocket-handkerchief." (*Journal*, 1890, i. 55.)

That friendly call was the making of Cadell. After the catastrophe which had engulfed in one common ruin the great concerns of Hurst & Co., Constable & Co., and Ballantyne & Co., Cadell became Sir Walter's sole

publisher, and, by the aid of friends, was enabled to purchase on his own and the author's behalf, all the copyrights that came into the market, by the manipulation of which he relieved Sir Walter of an immense part of his total indebtedness, besides realizing for himself a very handsome fortune. When I was an apprentice, Mr. Cadell was still hard at work in St. Andrew's Square, although by that time his fortunes were assured. He confined his business almost entirely to the issuing in varied shapes of the works of Sir Walter Scott. He did not live long enough to know the full extent of the popularity that was to attend the "Waverley Novels," of which sixpenny and even threepenny editions have of late years been issued in hundreds of thousands.

Forty-five George Street was then, as it still is, the address of William Blackwood & Sons. Their "Saloon" used to be talked of by my shop-mates as a wonderful place—the daily lounge of "intellectual Edinburgh." When on my collecting expeditions, I only saw it, wonderingly, from the outside, but since that time I have earned the right to enter.

Another of the publishing firms of my young days has grown greater and greater with the advancing years—that of A. and C. Black, the present proprietors of the “Encyclopædia Britannica,” a magnificent edition of which has lately been brought to a successful conclusion. The name of the founder of this house will long be remembered, for Adam Black was truly “a citizen of credit and renown” even when I began my apprenticeship in 1837; and as my master Mr. Tait and he were brothers-in-law, and often together, I had opportunities of knowing Mr. Black, who once told me that I would look more like a business-man if I would get my hair cut.—“Man,” said he, “you look for all the world like a second-rate poet.” To deliver the parts of the “Encyclopædia Britannica” as they came out to a few of Mr. Tait’s customers was at one time a part of my work as an apprentice, but to the latest edition of that great work I was permitted to make a contribution, and I look upon it as somewhat of a feat that, by the kindness of the late Dr. Stoddart, of the *Glasgow Herald*, and his most capable successor in the editorial chair, Mr.

Charles Russell, I successively reviewed (or rather, gave an account of) the whole of the twenty-five volumes of the ninth edition as they were published. Mr. Black, a statue of whom may be seen in Princes Street, in the course of his long and honourable life not only served his native city as Lord Provost, but also for many years represented it in Parliament.

The business now carried on by Sir Thomas Clark, Bart. (Messrs. T. and T. Clark) was, I believe, originated by his uncle, whom we used to call a "law bookseller," although the publication of theological works constituted, I fancy, the profitable part of the concern. Sir Thomas Clark has served the city of Edinburgh as Lord Provost, and has likewise been Master of the Merchant Company. So also has Sir Thomas Jamieson Boyd, the present head of the firm of Oliver & Boyd, the publishers of the world-renowned Almanac—the Scottish *Whitaker*.

Oliver & Boyd's was a constant place of call for booksellers' apprentices when I belonged to the order, for the firm acted as

agent for some of the largest London publishers, such as John Murray, of Albemarle Street, and Charles Knight, and collecting boys were always sure of a great haul at Tweeddale Court. The business of collecting was often a very laborious one, especially to boys who took no pains to read the advertisements of the London publishers, and had to hunt for the agents at haphazard. Messrs. Oliver & Boyd, it used to be said, began business by producing penny picture books—"chap-books," a story which, I daresay, may be told of other great houses.

II

It is not my intention to enumerate all the publishing and retail bookselling houses of 1837-8. In an address delivered on one occasion to the Edinburgh Booksellers' Society, Mr. Adam Black said that, "at one time there were more barbers than booksellers in the city, but brains," he continued, "ultimately triumphed, and 'the trade' found itself in a

majority." In the year 1837 it numbered a hundred and twenty-eight individuals or firms, some of whom, as will be supposed, were of little account—a good many of them, indeed, were merely stationers; others were called booksellers, although they only dealt in one article, such as the printers and publishers of the *Edinburgh Directory* or the *Court of Session Rolls*. In addition to the names I have given, Messrs. Bell & Bradfute may be mentioned as still carrying on business, an old house with an honourable record, and dealing almost exclusively in the literature of the law.

In 1837 the warehouse of Messrs. Chambers was situated in Waterloo Place, *down* a flight of stairs, I think. Maclachlan & Stewart carried on a large business in medical works on the South Bridge, opposite the University, and their sign is still to be seen over the same door. Mr. John Menzies had a small shop at 61, Princes Street, but his sons are now at the head of an extensive wholesale establishment in Hanover Street. The fame of the brothers Nelson as publishers is world-wide, and their

vast printing, publishing and bookbinding works are at present one of the sights of the city. Their father, the originator of the business, was to be seen during the period I am trying to illustrate, in a small book-shop in the West Bow, where he had begun his career as a publisher of works in "Numbers." The house of Oliphant still flourishes, and is extensively engaged in the production of books. Waterston, too, is yet a name in the trade as it was when I was a message-boy. Mr. Stevenson was then, as now, an Antiquarian bookseller; as also the venerable Mr. James Stillie, his shop in 1837 being situated in the area of a house in North Bank Street. Other names which survive I can only mention—Messrs. Robert Grant & Son, Gall & Inglis, Mr. Jack, an extensive publisher, now at the Grange, succeeded Laing & Forbes, who were the successors of Manners & Miller. Messrs. Fullerton & Co., and Blackie & Sons are also represented in the Modern Athens, as they were in '37, and I see also in the list of to-day the names of Collie & Brydone.

Circulating Libraries were pretty numerous

throughout Edinburgh in 1837, for in that year fourteen were open, the majority of them doing well. That kept by Mr. W. Wilson in George Street was of historic interest, as having been founded by Allan Ramsay. Many of the books that had been handled by the poet and his successors were yet in the library when, by the kindness of the proprietor, I was placed on the "free list."

Some of the booksellers of those days, with whom I was somewhat of a favourite, were "characters." I may name quaint old James Vair, once of the Horse Wynd, but then of Bristo Street, who used occasionally to show me some rare old books and tracts, as also old coins and other curiosities, and invite me occasionally to take "a chack" (luncheon) with him; and on occasion he would lend me books to read. He possessed great stores of "old world" knowledge. "Yes, boy," he would say, over our bit of bread-and-cheese, "I have told Sir Walter many a good story, and young Robert Chambers too. I have been a sort of reservoir to lots of literary men, who when they got on horseback rode past my door

without looking my way." And when he said this, Mr. Vair would sometimes look very savage indeed.

Mr. Nicol Bowack, of Leith Street, was fond of a "crack," and was able to tell stories of the days of Sir Walter Scott, to which I was proud to listen. James Kay, another of the "characters," had little personal habits, which gained him the nickname of "dirty Kay" from the irreverent apprentices. He was a dealer in free-thinking books, some of which, however, he was afraid to offer for public sale, as he thought the "police would not stand them."

School books were a speciality in one or two shops; if I mistake not, Messrs. Stirling & Kenny dealt in them, and also, oddly enough, in plays.

I forget the speciality of Fraser & Co., whose warehouse was on a stair familiar to me. Mr. P. S. Fraser was in his time a well-known man in Edinburgh, "a remarkable social force in his own person," as Mr. De Quincey was wont to describe him. He took a prominent part in many of the high jinks

and tavern feasts which, dying out in the forties, were still to some extent a fashion.


III

In a notice of "the trade," a word or two may fitly be said about the printing-offices. In 1837 there were over eighty letter-press printers in Edinburgh, great and small; the firm of Ballantyne & Co. was then, as now, carrying on business at "Paul's Work," and of other large offices there were the "King's Printing-Office" in Blair Street, and the establishments in Thistle Street of Constable & Co., Stevenson (printer to the University), Shortreede & Gall, and Smellie. Of the various newspaper presses, only one took in book-work and stereotyping—that of the *Caledonian Mercury* in the High Street, behind which there was a kind of "literary" public-house, a "howff" of newspaper men of the minor sort and of compositors, and especially of "pigs," as the practitional pressmen were called. As has often been related of these servitors of literature, most in those days were fond of a "wee drappie"; and

nearly every office or group of offices had its favourite public-house of call, the general tipple being bottled ale, of the variety known as "Strong."

I had often occasion to visit "Paul's Work," which my friend, Mr. R. H. Patterson, afterwards editor of the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, was one of the "readers." Ballantyne's was an office in which many "characters" were to be found, including "the Major," Mr. Cartwright, an accomplished printers'-reader ; Mr. Christie, one of the foremen ; and William Tofts, one of the machinists. These men had all known Sir Walter, Mr. Lockhart, Mr. Constable, Mr. Blackwood, Professor Wilson, and others of the bright spirits of "Maga." One of the old "pigs" of the house delighted to tell us stories about Sir Walter, "stories that Lockhart kent naething ava aboot." He maintained that he knew who wrote the novels "almost as soon as the master" (Mr. James Ballantyne). When asked how that came about, he would tell his best tale with a sufficient amount of importance, and although it was credited in the office, I cannot guarantee its accuracy. "I had just

begun (he would say) to a new sheet of 'Guy Mannering' one night awhile after twelve—we were working late in the press-room at that time—and all the compositors had left, when in comes Mr. Ballantyne himself, with a letter in his hand and a lot of types. 'I am going to make a small alteration, Sandy,' he said, 'just unlock the forme, will you? I'll not keep you many minutes.' Well, I did as I was bidden, and Mr. B., looking at the letter, altered three lines on one page and one line on another; 'That will do now, I think, Sandy,' were his words, 'but first pull a sheet till I see.' The master then looked carefully over the two pages and said, 'Bring me the printed sheets—they'll have to be destroyed,' and off he went, never thinking that he had left the letter lying on my bank. I had barely time to get a glimpse at it, when back came Mr. Ballantyne, but I kent the hand weel, and the signature, and it was 'Walter Scott.' I had a great lang ballant (ballad) in Sir Walter's ain hand o' write at hame, so that I was nae stranger to it. I would hae likit to see what the difference was that was made in the sheets, but he made me



carry them up to his room. So you see, gentlemen, I kent the grand secret, when it *was* a secret."

The Edinburgh newspapers of 1837 may now be noticed. The *Evening Courant*, the oldest newspaper in Scotland, and which in its palmy days had for contributors Christopher North, Lockhart, Aytoun, De Quincey, and Hogg, came out thrice a week, neutral in politics, but leaning to the Tory side. It became a daily and a professed Conservative in 1860, and died after many struggles early in 1866. From 1860 to 1864 it was edited by Mr. James Hannay, in whose time the *Courant* broke many a lance with the *Scotsman*, then edited by Russel—the two editors being excellent friends in everything but politics. Two other Conservative journals were published in Edinburgh when I was a youth, the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, merged, after a long career, in the *Courant*—and the *Evening Post*. I do not know the names of the proprietors of the latter, but I afterwards knew Mr. Alexander Cannon ("Sandy Cannon") who was connected with it as publisher, and afterwards

figured as a macer in the Court of Session. He was an authority on coursing, an ardent Conservative, and genial over the toddy-tumbler. In 1861 the *Evening Post* died "hard," after a long struggle, carried on at no small expense to one or two lovers of the Conservative cause.

The *Edinburgh Advertiser* was at one period of its history a most remunerative property; the son and successor of its first proprietor, Donaldson, leaving a large sum to build the well-known "Hospital," which bears his name, and in which a number of children are boarded and educated. Mr. Robert Chambers was at one time (1832) the editor of the *Advertiser*. He was succeeded by the Rev. Andrew Crichton, who conducted it until 1850, when he was followed by Mr. R. H. Patterson, before mentioned, a frequent contributor on economic subjects to *Blackwood's Magazine*, in the printing-office of which, after leaving Ballantyne & Co., he had become chief "reader." He sometimes gave me a few of the monthly magazines to review in his paper, and I am his debtor both for kindness and for knowledge,

which I might never have obtained from any other person. When, after many days, we "forgathered" in Glasgow, we recalled the days of our youth and our Edinburgh gaities in the middle of this elderly century.

The *Caledonian Mercury*, which dated from 1729, was published three times a week, until it became a daily in 1855. It was the property of Mr. Thomas Allan, a son of the private banker who is more than once referred to in Lockhart's "Life of Scott," in connection with the heavy discount transactions indulged in by the author of "Waverley" and his publishers and printers. Mr. Tait was interested in the *Observer*, but I do not know in what way. He favoured it, however, with a considerable share of his advertising. I have heard that Mr. Murray, the publisher of that journal, was the first man who ever reported the proceedings of the Town Council, and in the beginning (in the days of the unreformed Council, I presume) he used to take his "notes" while concealed under the table! The *Scottish Pilot* was begun in 1837, but did not last many years; the *Weekly Journal*, which, when it expired in 1848, had endured for more

than a century, was edited from 1806 till 1833 by Scott's friend, James Ballantyne; and in 1837 was still a power under Thomas Aird, the poet. At one period the *Journal* was famed for its dramatic criticisms, written by John Ballantyne (Scott's "Rigdumfunnidos"). If I am not mistaken, he on one occasion printed an elaborate notice of a performance of *Lady Macbeth* by Mrs. Siddons, which at the last moment failed to come off; but the critic tried to get out of the scrape by pointing out that what he had written contained no reference to any date, but was simply an essay at large.

The *North British Advertiser* was a newspaper without news! It was simply an advertising sheet, circulated on loan from Saturday till Monday throughout the city, and then posted all over the country. The Messrs. Gray had to fight a long battle before they saw their venture at the paying point, but that once achieved fortune came by rapid strides. In its struggling days the enterprise was handicapped with a heavy paper-duty, a duty on every advertisement, and a compulsory stamp for postage as well. Among Mr. Gray's numerous

schemes to render his paper useful, he turned a well-known erection which stood at the Princes Street and Shakespeare Square end of the North Bridge into an ornamental "Kiosk," in each window of which was exhibited a page of the paper.

I have yet to notice the *Scotsman*, which in '38 had attained its majority, for it was born in 1817. It had long been a flourishing institution and it has continued to flourish, though all its competitors of fifty years ago have died out. The *Scotsman* came to the aid of the Whigs, when such an organ was much needed in the battle with Tory domination. Writing of its establishment, Mr. Adam Black said,—“In the beginning of this year (1817), the *Scotsman* newspaper was started, and was hailed by the majority of the people as a deliverance from the slavish sycophancy of the other newspapers.”

The gentlemen who originated the *Scotsman*, Messrs. W. Ritchie and C. Maclaren, were well known to their fellow-citizens. In 1818-19 the editor was Mr. J. R. M'Culloch, afterwards the head of the Stationery Office, and

well known as the author of the "Commercial Dictionary." Mr. M'Culloch's successor was Mr. Charles Maclaren, Mr. W. Ritchie assisting, a scholar and a man of scientific and other attainments. Then, in 1845, came Alexander Russel, under whose editorship the paper gained more and more influence, and became the great property it continues to be.

In these early days of mine, newspapers were dear, and most people gained their knowledge of what was going on by hiring them at a penny an hour, or by subscribing in groups, the paper passing from hand to hand among neighbours in town and country.

TRADE REMINISCENCES OF SIR WALTER.

WHEN I began my apprenticeship, Scott's memory was cherished by "the trade," and the memory also of Archibald Constable, "prince of publishers," was still green in the recollection of Edinburgh booksellers, several of whom had been his contemporaries and customers. Five years previously the grand old "Waverley Romancer" had been buried in the graveyard of Dryburgh Abbey; but the book-shops of the Modern Athens were in 1837 stocked with an abundant supply of his romances, and the masters of these stores of literature and their assistants never wearied of telling their younger brethren about the ever-increasing excitement which attended the issue of the different novels.

In the shop where I served my apprenticeship several copies of original and early sets


were to be seen on the shelves, and were looked upon with a certain amount of veneration; but, to tell the truth, they remained undisturbed all the time I was in Mr. Tait's service—a period of over nine years. It was not likely, indeed, that such expensive copies would sell readily in the face of the issue of the “Magnum Opus”—the “Waverley Edition”—which had begun some years before. It was also known that the publisher had projected a “People's Edition,” which, when it came out in twopenny numbers, proved a great success, eighty thousand copies being sold immediately.

In 1837 the tide of Waverley-Novel popularity had ebbed considerably in Edinburgh, and left many booksellers stranded amid their old stocks. “But you of the trade should not complain,” said on a social occasion Mr. Anderson, senior, a High-Street bookseller of the Waverley period, “you have all made money by Sir Walter's works, and his memory is present to you; though it is the libraries that, over all the country, have made most money. Willie Wilson, John Sutherland,

Elder Ogilvie, and Mrs. Tansh must have cleared thousands of pounds among them during the past two-and-twenty years by the lending of these books."

The Mr. Wilson here referred to, whose shop was situated in 44, George Street, was a well-known Edinburgh citizen, and afterwards a member of the Town Council, who was wont upon fitting occasions to relate his experience of library work in the days when the Waverley Novels and the characters therein delineated were a theme of universal conversation. "When 'Guy Mannering,' 'The Antiquary,' 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian,' 'Rob Roy,' and 'Ivanhoe' were in course of being issued," said the genial Councillor, "you might have put thirty copies of each into any library, and then another thirty would have been asked for; everybody wanted the first volume at the same moment." Mr. Sutherland, of Calton Street, who, in addition to keeping a library, was also publisher of Mackay Wilson's popular "Tales of the Borders" and the apprentice-master of the late Dr. William Chambers, hit on the plan, which was adopted by many other

libraries, of splitting each of the volumes as they appeared into two parts, so that he might keep his customers going. Dr. Chambers was wont to relate as one of the reminiscences of his apprentice days, that he was engaged to read Sir Walter Scott's and other novels to a baker and his sons in Canal Street, while they were preparing their "batch" at five o'clock in the morning, the daily reward being a new roll, which, with the addition of a halfpenny-worth of milk purchased at a dairy, constituted his breakfast for the day. John Sutherland, besides carrying on his publishing, bookselling, and library business, was a State-Lottery agent. His shopman one day told to a little party of booksellers' assistants, held in Mrs. Dow's oyster tavern in Shakespeare Square ("Pandores" in those days were sixpence "a board," including a liberal supply of bread-and-butter), an anecdote of a customer who gained a prize through reading "The Fortunes of Nigel." Nothing would please him but ticket No. 1,624, which, not being in the possession of Mr. Sutherland, had to be sought for. It was ultimately obtained, and in the fulness of time



it was drawn a capital prize. When asked his reason for fancying that number, the winner explained—"Well, you see, sir, I had been reading the novel about 'Jingling Geordie,' and as I knew that 1624 was the year of George Heriot's death, I took it into my head that it would come out of the wheel a prize, and so it has." The prize, I believe, was the eighth part of twenty thousand pounds.

Inspired probably by the great demand for the Waverley Novels among the readers who patronized his library, Sutherland was wont to prophesy that one day a copy of the Waverley stories would be found in every house in the three kingdoms, his meaning doubtless being that the books would be ultimately produced at such a price as to place them within the reach of the poorest. He has certainly been more successful than most prophets. Notwithstanding the enormous number of copies placed in circulation by librarians at the time indicated, many private families joined purses for the purchase of the more popular of Sir Walter's romances as they were published. They read the work in turn, or heard it read

at reading parties (which at the time were common enough), and the book was ultimately sold to the highest bidder among the group. I have heard, too, that several workmen in shops adjacent to Sutherland's library arranged with him for a reading of the "Heart of Mid-Lothian" and "Rob Roy," one of the men reading the book aloud to his comrades. Nor was the excitement confined to Edinburgh. In country towns it was equally great. I remember seeing, in a Scottish provincial town, the novel of "Guy Mannering" bound in portions of a hundred pages, each of which even at that time (1832) was lent to read at the price of twopence per night. As it ran to ten parts, the reading cost one shilling and eightpence; and the feat of perusal in one case was achieved, not in ten nights, but in a gallop of ten hours!

One of Mr. Constable's men, who on two or three occasions had been sent up to London with the supplies of the novels, used to relate how great the excitement was wont to be among "the trade" in London, when the Leith smack arrived bearing the precious

bales. Mr. Constable was himself present on one occasion to witness the scene and wrote about it to Sir Walter, telling him that the London agents had men waiting the arrival of the smacks to get out the books, which were always shipped in unbound sheets ; porters and carts being in readiness to carry off the treasures to the Row, or to " 90, Cheapside," where the bookbinders were ready to begin work, so that in a very short time bound copies were on the way by coach and waggon to all parts of England.

One of the many out-of-the-way stories which were in circulation about the novels fifty years ago, may be here related as it was given by the present writer several years since in *Chambers's Journal*.

" A nobleman, living in a rather inaccessible part of England, had sent his valet expressly to procure for himself and guests the new Scottish novel, which was expected to reach London before the return-day of the coach. The valet, having a friend in Messrs. Hurst & Robinson's warehouse, was assured that he would obtain an early copy. Unfortunately,

the smack' did not arrive till the next coach-day, and only cast anchor in the Thames two hours before the starting of the mail. A copy of the novel could not be bound in time ; and the valet, determined not to lose other two days, would not wait, but set off at once with his master's copy of the work in quires, intending to have it bound by the local binder. A gig, however, was in waiting at the inn for the arrival of the messenger, with orders for him to return home at once, as the book was eagerly waited for. No sooner did he reach his destination than the packet was impatiently opened ; but when the condition of the book was seen, all were embarrassed : it was in unfolded sheets, and no one knew what to do with them ! The robber's cave without the 'Open sesame' of Ali Baba was not a greater cause of chagrin than the possession of a Waverley Novel which could not be read. At length a daughter of the house, by much studying and examining of the pages, discovered how to fold them ; and this being accomplished, the story was read aloud to the eagerly expectant company."

It has been more than once written of Sir Walter that he was hail fellow well met with the players of his plays, but such statements must be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. No man was more conservative of his personal dignity than the author of "Waverley," and when a well-known Scottish actor, of whom Sir Walter had taken friendly notice, asked him, on the occasion of his going to London, for a few letters of introduction, they were refused. "But," said Scott, "I have written to my friends about you," and so he had, but in a very gingerly way. Players were "vaga-bonds by Act of Parliament," and whilst Sir Walter met the aristocracy of the stage readily enough, he was never, as has been more than once asserted, unduly familiar with the rank and file of the profession. I have heard my father say that, when Sir Walter of an afternoon came along Princes Street, nearly every man that he met uncovered ; and David Peters, beadle in an Episcopal Church in Edinburgh, and an occasional "waiter" at dinner-parties, told the writer that, once at a dinner-party where the great author was a guest, a young

gentleman shouted out, "Pleasure of wine with you, Scott!" Sir Walter stared at him, but did not lift his glass. A young man, who had been once in the employment of Mr. Constable, told a relative of mine that Scott often noticed him, "but none of us ever spoke to Sir Walter unless he spoke to us first; that was the rule."

I very soon learned during my apprenticeship that a spirit of exaggeration was abroad throughout "the trade" regarding Sir Walter and his doings. Some of the booksellers invariably spoke of the great man with bated breath: one, I remember, possessed a copy of "Guy Mannering" on which the author had made two or three marginal notes, and this book was treasured as a sacred thing which to be shown was a favour. It was kept in a lockfast cupboard, and when taken out to be exhibited the owner approached the press on tiptoe, and brought forth the volume with great solemnity, all the while looking fearfully around him, as if he were afraid the visitor would run away with it.

I never saw Archibald Constable, the great

bibliopole ; but James Shaw, of Cadell's publishing house, who had been in his employment, used to speak of him in enthusiastic terms, and was wont to conclude the anecdotes he told so well with—"It was his authors who ruined him: he never paid these gentlemen less than two, and some got three, prices for what they wrote, and it was Mr. Constable who made Sir Walter." While I was in the employment of Mr. Tait, Mr. Cadell, at one time a partner in the house of Constable & Co., was then the publisher and absolute proprietor of the whole of Sir Walter's work. My father having been a servant of Mr. Cadell's, told some little incidents regarding the novels which have not been made public, as, for instance, that on one occasion three or four pages of one of the stories had to be cancelled in consequence of a compositor having interpolated something absurd after the author's final corrections had been made.

“THE EDINBURGH REVIEW”

“I PROPOSED that we should get up a Review,” says the Rev. Sydney Smith in his account of the foundation of *The Edinburgh*. This was spoken in the residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey, in his flat in Buccleuch Place—“not in either the eighth or the ninth storey, neither of which ever existed, but in the third storey, of what is now No. 18 of the street,” says Lord Cockburn. “The proposal was acceded to with acclamation. I was appointed Editor and remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*.” This account is explicit enough, and Mr. Smith may have been Editor of the first number, although, according to Lord Jeffrey, there was at the beginning no individual editor—Francis Horner, Dr. Thomas Brown (author of the “Philosophy of the Human Mind”), Lord Murray, Dr. John Thomson,

Thomas Thomson, the Rev. Sydney Smith and Lord Webb Seymour appearing all to have taken their part in producing it.

My first acquaintance with the *Review* was made in delivering it to about half a dozen gentlemen who were customers of Mr. Tait, and as their residences were far apart, many a long walk with copies of the blue and yellow periodical under my arm was necessary. No matter at what hour of the day the *Review* might come to hand, it had to be procured from the warehouse of Messrs. Adam and Charles Black, at that time agents for its sale, and be instantly carried to the subscribers.

To have delayed its delivery over a night would in those days have been looked upon as something scandalous. Knowing no better, I often wondered at the fuss which was made about the *Edinburgh Review*, and on wet days I fear that many a time I banned it, and likewise those who read it, very heartily. The time came, however, when I blessed it, but that was long after my apprenticeship days. It was, indeed, not long ago, when one fine morning the post brought me a letter enclosing

a cheque from the editor for value received in the form of a contribution.

The *Review*, when first I had occasion to handle it, had been in existence for a period of thirty-five years, having been commenced in 1802, with Mr. Constable as publisher. The fact of its being looked for with such eagerness shows how successful it had become; but indeed it had made a hit from the very beginning.

Various statements have been published from time to time regarding the early history of this celebrated periodical. Such questions as, "Who originated it?" "Who owned the property?" and "Who edited it?" have been asked and answered over and over again, so far as the knowledge of its early history admitted of an answer being given. But notwithstanding much of what has been said by Sydney Smith and others, I believe the exact truth has never become known. I cannot, of course, speak on these points from personal knowledge, but I am in possession of some second-hand information that my readers may not, perhaps, think devoid of interest.

What I know about the matter was derived

from a humble but, as I believe, perfectly truthful source, my informant having been an old pressman, who as a boy had pulled the *Edinburgh* proofs in the printing-office of Mr. Willison, the father-in-law of Mr. Constable. Who the editor was when the *Review* began, "auld Tammas," as he was called in my day, had no doubt,—“it was Mr. Constable himself,” was the unvarying reply when Thomas was questioned on the subject. “Mony a time, when we’ve had a sheet made ready, and were just gaun to start, word would come to the foreman to wait for Mr. Constable’s proof, and we had to wait till he had made his corrections, and sometimes they were that heavy we had to lift the formes so as to get them made. I kent his writing fine, and have seen his proofs often.”

According to the same authority, “the nobbs that wrote for it met in this very hoose (Currie’s public-house, just behind the *Caledonian Mercury* office) to read over their papers to one another and crack their jokes, and whenever I was sent in wi’ a proof, I was sure to be offered a drink of strong ale, which

one of them used to say was the natural drink of printers, an' so it was."

A Mr. Morrison—an artist and land surveyor, who had been well acquainted with Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Constable—was, when I knew him, a frequent visitor to my master. He was endeavouring to interest Mr. Tait in a new way of taking portraits on glass, "Daguerreotype" I think he called them. The plates he had brought with him one day to show Mr. Tait and some friends, were unfortunately left by Mr. Morrison on a table in the front shop, whilst he went into the private room to announce his arrival. During his absence one of the young men lifted one of the plates to look at it, and thinking the figure upon it rather dim, used his pocket-handkerchief to dust it. Alas! with unlooked-for effect, for he wiped away the portrait, and, not having the moral courage to confess, Morrison's work was at once condemned, much to his chagrin, as being too evanescent ever to become of practical use. But my reason for bringing Mr. Morrison on the scene is, that he, too, always maintained that "the publisher

of the *Edinburgh Review* was undoubtedly the editor of the first three or four numbers, and a capital editor he was, and I know Sir Walter Scott and others thought so too." In 1837 and 1838 there were men in more than one of the Edinburgh book-shops who had been in the service of the great publisher. They maintained that he had a chief hand in the inception of the *Review*, and that from the first, if he was not literally the proprietor, he certainly found the money to pay his father-in-law for the printing. In some notes given to Dr. Robert Chambers by Lord Jeffrey, his Lordship wrote, "I cannot say exactly where the project of the *Edinburgh Review* was first *talked of* among the projectors ; but the first serious consultation about it, and which led to our application to a publisher, was held in a small house where I then lived in Buccleuch Place." Lord Jeffrey also states that the first three numbers were given to the publisher, he taking the risk and defraying the charges.

It may be recalled that the *Review* was not original in its title. Nearly half a century (1755) before it began there had been an

Edinburgh Review, published under the auspices of Adam Smith, Robertson and Blair. Only two numbers of it had appeared when it died "because it was not able to live."

Of Constable having been editor of the *Review* started in 1802, much evidence might be adduced. Jeffrey is said to have been appointed to that responsible post, and to have edited the *Review* from an early date. If that were so, then Mr. Constable edited the editor, seeing that for some time after the date at which Jeffrey is said to have ascended the editorial throne, the active publisher, as may be gathered from his correspondence, is found suggesting subjects and writers. Mr. Jeffrey's position as autocrat must have come later.

Stories were current, when I was in the trade, of terrible feuds generated by various articles in the *Review*. In his *Life of Jeffrey*, Cockburn relates how the foolish Lord Buchan, in the presence of his family and servants, kicked the "Cevallos number" of the *Edinburgh* from the innermost end of his lobby into the street. Of a similar incident I was an eye-

witness. A gentleman, to whom I was in the habit of carrying a copy, threw it upon the fire of his entrance-hall, and servants poked it about till it was well consumed, my subscriber dancing up and down in a hot fury all the time. "Tell Mr. Tait," he said to me, "never to send another copy of that scurrilous thing here. Do you hear, boy, what I say?" "Yes, sir," I replied, making my exit as quickly as possible. That was, I think, in October 1838. But I never heard why the gentleman so misconducted himself.

Mr. Constable was encouraged by many friends to keep the *Review* going. Among others who gave him this good counsel was Sydney Smith himself, who wrote to him, "If you will give £200 per annum to your Editor, and ten guineas a sheet, you will soon have the best *Review* in Europe. This town, I am convinced, is preferable to all others for such an undertaking, from the abundance of literary men it contains, and from the freedom which at this distance they can exercise towards the wits of the South." The articles contained in the earliest numbers of the *Edinburgh* (we are

told in Mr. Thomas Constable's memorial of his father) "were presented gratuitously to the publisher," but the rate of remuneration to the contributors was soon thereafter fixed at sixteen guineas per sheet, and this struck a keynote which has ever since been of some advantage to literary men connected with similar undertakings." In the Life of Lord Jeffrey it is stated that "two-thirds of the articles were paid much higher, averaging, I should think, from twenty to twenty-five guineas a sheet on the whole number. I had, I might say, an unlimited discretion in this respect, and must do the publishers the justice to say that they never made the slightest objection." Sydney Smith's proposal to remunerate the Editor with the sum of £200 per annum was far exceeded by the liberal publisher. We have the word of Dr. Robert Chambers for it that the Editor was paid not £200 per annum, but 200 guineas for each number.

It is not generally known that the first number was printed several months before it was published. It has been insinuated that

the publisher was afraid to begin, but it is more likely that the issue was delayed for purely trade reasons. The impression resolved upon from the first number was but seven hundred and fifty, a supply which proved utterly inadequate to the demand; even another edition of a like number had to be supplemented. By the year 1808 the circulation had risen to eight thousand.

At one time the sale reached about fourteen thousand, the profit resulting to the publisher, after paying the salary of the Editor, and the sums agreed upon for contributions, being in the opinion of the trade not less than five thousand pounds per annum. I do not intend to trace the history of the *Review* further.

“BLACKWOOD’S MAGAZINE ”

WHEN in my early apprentice days I was first enabled to dip into the pages of “Maga,” its chief attraction was the later series of “The Diary of a Late Physician.” I greatly enjoyed the papers, and also, later on, the same author’s story of “Ten Thousand a Year.” When sent for copies of the magazine, I usually contrived that the message should happen about my dinner-hour, and in several of the common-stairs of the eastern division of George Street, I would sit on the steps for nearly an hour engrossed by the perusal of some interesting portion of its pages, munching at the same time my dinner of bread-and-cheese. The pages of the copies of the magazine in my custody as collector were, of course, uncut, but, having as many as eight or ten in my charge, I managed without its being discovered to cut

open one leaf in each of the numbers in order to master the narrative.

I pursued a similar plan with others of the magazines whenever I got a chance, especially *Bentley's Miscellany*, which contained in my young days "Jack Sheppard." Since my 'prentice time—in fact not long ago—I have attempted the perusal of "Ten Thousand a Year," but "its magic hath departed." It has lost the flavour it had when I perused it by stealth—Titmouse, Tag Rag, Oily Gammon, even sweet Kate Aubrey, seem now to me not a little stagey, but I can still turn to the "Diary" with something of the old enjoyment.

The preface to the volume, narrating the travels of the MS., and how, after having been submitted to many magazines, its merits were "discovered by the astute publisher of *Blackwood*," is singularly interesting, and ought to prove encouraging to all literary aspirants. Mr. Blackwood became in time his own editor, and he was both skilful and fortunate in "discovering" many good writers to sustain the fame of his magazine.

Archibald Constable and William Blackwood

were contemporaries—"rivals in trade," as some said, "with little love lost between them," but with that circumstance I have no concern. Each was a master-hand in the business he pursued. The father of the George-Street firm served his time with Messrs. Bell & Bradfute, a firm still of good renown in the "grey metropolis of the North." For a period of six years Mr. Blackwood remained in its service, going through the usual round of apprentice drudgery, but at the same time reading everything he had time to read, and so acquiring for future use those great stores of general information about all matters literary, which ultimately became useful to him in the conduct of his business.

At the end of his apprenticeship young Blackwood, then twenty years of age, was selected by Mundell & Co. to manage a branch of their business in Glasgow. The branch was given up in about a year, when Mr. Blackwood entered into partnership with Mr. Ross, a bookseller and auctioneer on the South Bridge, a connection which, however, was of short duration. A year or two in

London completed Mr. Blackwood's education as a bookseller ; and in 1804, having returned to Edinburgh, he began as a second-hand bookseller on the South Bridge, a department of the trade in which, having a natural taste for the work, he soon found himself without a rival. A remarkably well-arranged catalogue of his fine stock of books which he printed in 1812 made him known far a field, and, in time, led to London agencies. The publishing of books on his own account followed, and ultimately the magazine was started in Princes Street in April, 1817.

Among the projectors of the *Edinburgh Magazine* (as it was called at first) were Thomas Pringle, then a clerk in the Register House, and a versifier, and Mr. Cleghorn, a writer on agricultural subjects. These gentlemen were responsible for the contents of the first six numbers of the periodical, but before the sixth had appeared, the patience of the publisher was exhausted, and he resolved to take the matter into his own hands.

Forty years have elapsed since the following

was written, but I am unable to say when it appeared, having lost my reference :—

“Those only who may happen to remember the steady Toryism of William Blackwood throughout his entire career, can form anything like an adequate notion of his unmitigated vexation and disgust when he saw the place of honour in the first number of his magazine occupied by a series of exorbitant eulogiums culled from the public speeches of various Liberal members of Parliament, on that feeble and extravagantly overrated Whig politician, Mr. Francis Horner, and found that all recognition of the principles it was his object to promote had been carefully eschewed in its pages.

“Had the magazine been established for the express purpose of puffing the *Edinburgh Review* and its contributors, it could hardly have been more successful in the fulfilment of its mission. Nor was his tardy conviction of the folly with which he was justly chargeable, in having omitted to ascertain the political antecedents of his editors before he associated himself with them in so onerous a speculation,

at all calculated to soften or diminish his chagrin. The cloven hoof of Whiggery was traceable in every page, from the leading article in large type, with its hyperbolical praises of the defunct *Edinburgh* reviewer, to the nonpareil list of births, marriages, and deaths, which wound up the number and helped to eke out the promised tale of its pages. Finding himself in imminent danger of becoming not merely the scoff of his enemies, but the laughing-stock of his friends, to say nothing of the probable loss of capital in so abortive an attempt, he resolved, not unnaturally, to cut himself adrift from his tormentors, and feeling that expostulation was but a waste of breath in such a contest, he gave his editors notice, on the publication of the third number, that when the volume was completed, he should discontinue the work. A cry then went forth from his associates for compensation. Next came the tug-of-war, and the battle soon waxed fast and furious. After much chaffering between the respective law-agents of the parties, Pringle and his associates agreed to accept £125, in full of all demands, and thenceforward and for

ever to relieve the enraged and mortified bookseller from the inconvenience of so ill-assorted an alliance."

A history of the brilliant career of the firm of William Blackwood & Sons and of their magazine, could not fail to be as interesting as the recently published account of the House of Murray and of the *Quarterly Review*.

WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS

ONE Saturday afternoon in the summer of 1838, whilst crossing Bruentsfield Links on my way home to Morningside, endeavouring as I walked over the grass to read a story in one of the volumes of *Chambers's Journal*, then of a somewhat unwieldy size, I was stopped by two gentlemen, one of whom accosted me in kindly fashion and asked what I was reading. "*It is Chambers's Journal*, sir," was of course my reply. "Yes, I can see that," said the gentleman, "but what is the name of the story you are reading?" "It is about George MacQueen, the apprentice who was flogged with the cook's frying-pan for not delivering it promptly," said I. Then the other gentleman spoke. "Are you learning a business?" he asked, to which I answered that I was learning to be a bookseller with Mr. Tait of Princes

Street. "A capital place ; have you been there long ?" "No, sir, only ten months."

"Just so. Now can you tell me the size of that book, what it is called in the shop ?" was the next question. I described it as an oblong quarto, or a quarto in folio shape, a reply which both gentlemen, judging from their looks, seemed to think was to the point. My examiner then asked my name, who my father was, and where I lived. When I had made suitable replies I was allowed to go, the more pleasant-looking of the two saying, "We know Mr. Tait very well ; you are in a good place and have an excellent master."

I wondered at the time who these gentlemen were, the one bright and smiling, the other presenting a graver cast of countenance, but no long time elapsed ere I discovered their identity. They proved to be William and Robert Chambers, the conductors of the periodical they found me reading, a circumstance which was probably not unpleasing to them. Years afterwards, especially in the case of Dr. Robert Chambers, I had the pleasure of

knowing them more intimately, and in time I became a contributor to their *Journal*.

Mr. Tait and Mr. Robert Chambers were fast friends, and frequently corresponded on various topics, one of which was phrenology, a subject much discussed fifty years ago. Mr. Chambers was an out-and-out believer in it, but such was not Mr. Tait; and in his magazine, much to the disgust of Mr. George Combe and other disciples of Gall and Spurzheim, he gave on occasion pretty plainly (but not by his own hand) his views in the matter. Mr. Combe was so annoyed at the part Mr. Tait took in the phrenological controversies of the time that it was with much reluctance he permitted a copy of his book on America to be sent to *Tait* for review.

Chambers's Journal had been going on for five years when I went to business, and its success from the first was extraordinary—far beyond anything which had gone before it. It was in Leith Walk the Messrs. Chambers began bookselling in a very humble fashion, never dreaming even in their most ambitious moments (though the brothers were very

ambitious) that a day would come when the business they had founded would be worth a hundred thousand pounds, that sum being now the capital of the firm of "W. and R. Chambers, Limited." There is no need for me to re-tell the story of the brothers Chambers : how hard they worked in the days of their youth, for a bare subsistence, and in laying the solid foundation of knowledge on which was built their future eminence as writers and men of business ;—has it not been graphically told in the autobiographical volume which was published in 1872 ? But the struggle they made to gain a recognized place in Edinburgh society may now be referred to. With Dr. Robert Chambers, when I was in Tait's, this was rather a sore point, but he had resolved at an early period in his career that he would force recognition, and in time he was enabled to do so, despite the strong caste feeling which, although less strong than it had once been, was prevalent in Edinburgh fifty years ago. Religious prejudices had to be lived down ; and cheap literature, half a century back, and for a long time after, was thought "low." The

Chambers's were called "three-halfpenny people" by some folks who were afterwards glad to be invited to their parties. It was soon seen that Dr. Robert Chambers wielded an informed and graceful pen. His essays speedily attracted attention, and his wonderful compilations, such as the "Book of Days,"—which, however, is far more than a "compilation,"—came to be looked upon in time as excellent literature of their kind. Robert Chambers had not miscalculated his powers, and his claim to mix in the highest literary, legal and artistic society of "Auld Reekie," was ultimately (although rather unwillingly) conceded, as it had been conceded long before in other places, where the name of Chambers had become as a household word.

It used to be told of William Chambers that, in his early days, he had said, "To get daily bread is the problem of to-day: though they may give me a stone after I am dead." And they have; a statue having been recently erected in Edinburgh to the principal pioneer of cheap literature; and the statue has been placed in "Chambers Street."

A word or two may be said about the "Vestiges of Creation," of the authorship of which Robert Chambers has been from the first suspected. It made a great sensation on its appearance, and several large editions were sold—two things which are not inseparable, for, as booksellers well know, a work may be praised in every newspaper, and discussed at every dinner-table, without having a great sale.

My first knowledge of the book, other than being aware of its publication, was obtained by listening to the oration of an itinerant preacher, who went about denouncing it as something which would in time sap the influence of the Holy Scriptures; and he was not alone, for other preachers, both in pulpit and magazine, fulminated against the "Vestiges" with great force, and very little politeness.

As is usual in the case of anonymous books which make a hit, speculation as to the authorship was rife; and all sorts of names, including some of celebrity, were brought forward as possible or probable authors. Some of those named evinced, it is said, no desire to repudiate

the honour: there were men, indeed, who smiled and smirked their friends and even themselves into the belief that "they really had had a finger in the pie." One of the first persons who (to his own satisfaction) solved the problem was Mr. Tait, and in his opinion the author was Robert Chambers, whom, said Mr. Tait, "I have heard speak more than one part of the volume." But Mr. Tait had to be contented with the internal evidence, for he was not let into the secret.

One day Mrs. Robert Chambers, who occasionally made use of my knowledge of Fairy-tale books, had called to ask me to make a search for a rare work of the kind. Just at the moment a bore, from whom I was protecting the master, was holding forth with all his might on the "Vestiges," and declaring that Robert Chambers was no more the author of the book than he was. "He write such a book! it's not in him, he's the most over-rated literary man I ever knew." "How do you do, Mrs. Chambers?" said Mr. Tait, coming unexpectedly into the front shop by the private door: and as the bore disappeared with great

precipitation, Mrs. Chambers enjoyed a hearty laugh over his denunciations.

The most impudent thing that I remember in connection with the "Vestiges" was the offer for publication to several Edinburgh booksellers of the MS. of a pamphlet bearing some such title as, "A Word to my Critics, by the Author of the 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation.'" It would be charitable to believe that the man who wrote it was a lunatic.

In course of time it came to be generally believed that Robert Chambers was really the author of the "Vestiges," and when this belief seemed to be confirmed by Mr. Alexander Ireland's interesting account, there were no doubt in some circles the usual "I told you so!" exclamations. But the secret itself had so long been believed to be an open one, and the book forgotten—much more forgotten than it deserves—that not much interest was excited. A good many years ago a story went the round which may be repeated here for what it is worth (which is most probably nothing at all), to the effect that Mr. David Page, the well-known

geologist, who was then a young member of the literary staff of Messrs. W. and R. Chambers, upon being asked by Mr. William to write a notice of the sensational book for the *Journal*, at once came to the conclusion, after the perusal of a few of its pages, that it was written by Mr. Robert, and in consequence the work was not reviewed by Mr. Page. For months the name of the book was in every mouth, and one would be accosted by facetious friends, "Well, son of a cabbage, whither art thou progressing?" and a funny friend of Mr. Chambers, who was presiding at a merry party held in the "Rainbow Tavern," began one of his famous after-supper orations by addressing the company as "descendants of Apes"; and endless jokes were manufactured in the "Parliament House."

The pages of *Tait's Magazine* were, I remember, scrutinized in the hope that some clue to the authorship would be discovered in an expected review of the "Vestiges," but an elaborate estimate of the work was not given, only a "notice," and no word in it pointed to its authorship; nor in any of the more important

reviews of the book which appeared was Mr. Chambers "spotted"; very few persons indeed, even in his own circle of acquaintance, knew that he was engaged in such studies, and it is this circumstance which will always cast some doubt on the attribution.

CHEAP PERIODICALS — “CHAMBERS’S JOURNAL.”

NOTHING in the history of Literature is more striking than the evolution of the cheap “periodical.” In my boyish days, readable periodicals of small price were very scarce. My mother, an intelligent woman, and very fond of books, had great difficulty (we lived then near the town of Haddington) in obtaining any worth possessing. The family library was limited to a few odd volumes of a “Ladies’ Annual,” or “Pocket-book,” John Galt’s “Bachelor,” half a dozen of the chief religious books then in circulation, the “Confession of Faith,” and a few others whose titles I forget. These, with, at a later date, the “Tales of the Borders” and Barrie’s “Collection,” a well-known and interesting school-book of the time, and an occasional number of *Chambers’s*

Journal, constituted the literature of my early days. When, in the course of a year or two, we removed to the vicinity of Edinburgh, matters in respect of books brightened a little. I then obtained access to a greater variety, and, as I well remember, greatly enjoyed reading some numbers of a periodical called *The Schoolmaster*, edited by Mr. Johnstone, or, to speak more correctly, by Mrs. Johnstone, who in time, as elsewhere related, became the active conductor of *Tail's Edinburgh Magazine*.

When I went to business, the best known periodicals were *Chambers's Journal* and the *Penny Magazine*, published by Charles Knight, an excellent eight-page illustrated periodical. There was also *The Saturday Magazine*, conducted on similar lines. Besides such wholesome food there came from London such penny trash as *The Calendar of Horrors*, the *Penny Police Gazette*, and *Lives of the Highwaymen*, &c., all of which had a certain circulation. The late Mr. Henry Robinson, a Londoner, who began business as a dealer in periodicals in the Canongate, and finally settled in Green-

side Street (where his business is still carried on), was the first person in Edinburgh to develop what has since become an important business—the trade in penny periodicals, and, at a later date, in newspapers also.

It was a long time before he had any rival in the field, but as the trade increased in importance, one or two of the “respectable” booksellers ventured on the sale of *Reynolds’ Miscellany*, the *London Journal*, and similar periodicals. The demand for the two I have named became enormous, on account of the stories by J. F. Smith in the *London Journal*, and of G. W. M. Reynolds in his own *Miscellany*. To this fact I can testify, having at one time been engaged in the selling of these periodicals. “Kenneth,” an exciting story published in *Reynolds*, attracted great attention, some who read it being so much interested in the progress and fate of the characters that they used to visit my shop in the course of the week to chat about the story. One woman used to be in waiting at the door of my shop to get her copy the instant it arrived. “Is the villain

hanged yet, do you think?" was her usual salutation.

The part I played in the circulation of *Reynolds* and the *London Journal* was but a small one, but an increase of from eight to twelve dozen a week was no uncommon feature on the weekly order to the London agent who forwarded the copies, and when the excitement was culminating, I required a special lorry to bring my bales from the Goods station of the Caledonian Railway, whilst my friend Mr. Robinson did five times the amount of business in cheap literature that I was able to do. When either of our parcels missed fire, it was amusing to find those persons who had not obtained their copy at the usual place wandering all over the city to find one—a quest which was rarely successful. The *Family Herald* enjoyed a calmer existence, but the sale was always large and steady. In time a larger business came to be done in Edinburgh in the cheap London weekly newspapers,—*Weekly Times*, *Reynolds' Newspaper*, *Lloyd's*, *The News of the World*, and one or two others: the price of these news-

papers was then threepence each, and as they bore the red penny stamp, they were carried free by the Post-office. I have seen about half a ton weight of these journals arrive in Edinburgh on a Saturday morning, all of which would be distributed before the night was well advanced. These were the days when papers were dear because they had to contend with the duty on paper and the stamp, days when I used to let out the *Scotsman*, *Witness*, and *Evening Courant*, to read at a penny the hour.

I cannot go further without saying a few words regarding Mr. Robinson, who became in time a prominent person in Edinburgh with his civil manners, his good-natured face, and broad-brimmed white hat. It was he who *made* the periodical trade in Edinburgh, and who in doing so had to submit to much obloquy, as he was often attacked by jealous clergymen for the part he played "in poisoning the minds of the people by the distribution of immoral literature." But he was not the man to be easily turned from his purpose, and so, with vigour and determination he fought on till he

had vanquished all his opponents. To one clergyman who was very bitter indeed, Mr. Robinson gave a few copies of the serials in greatest demand, and insisted on his reading them, telling him he felt sure he had never yet looked at them, and that if he would take that trouble, he would change his mind. This the clergyman did, and frankly confessed that he had been misinformed. From personal knowledge I am able to state that several of the best men in Edinburgh took in for the perusal of their families both the *London Journal* and the *Family Herald*, as well as some other papers absurdly denounced as "immoral." For the part he played in the dissemination of cheap periodicals, Mr. Robinson's memory deserves to be held in remembrance.

Something might here be said of John Cassell's publications, and of his exertions in the agitation for the repeal of the paper-duty, but, as I know more about *Chambers's Journal* I shall devote to it what remains of this chapter.

Its success from the beginning was so great

and so unprecedented that it used to be asserted loosely that William Chambers was "carried off his feet"—a story which I never believed : he was far too "firm-set" a man for anything of the kind ; but I am a believer in another tale which was told about him. When he was an apprentice with John Sutherland (already mentioned as a bookseller and lottery agent), William was frequently sent on errands to "The Sanctuary" of Holyrood, and so became acquainted with several debtors who, although unable to pay their creditors, had money for lottery tickets. They sometimes bestowed presents on the industrious apprentice. "There's a shilling for luck ; I hope this number will turn out a prize, and when your prize turns up, you will be coming to see us in your own carriage." "Well, I believe, as my mother has foretold, that I will one day keep a carriage, but it will not be through a lottery ticket," said the judicious William, who was a great believer in the wisdom of his mother. He used to say that he believed he would be fortunate in life because his mother had one night dreamed of him as Dick Whittington—

so some of his fellow-apprentices used to tell us.

It is not perhaps generally known that the brothers Chambers did not begin with their *Journal*. Eleven years before, they had established the *Kaleidoscope*, named after Sir David Brewster's new toy. The price of this fortnightly periodical was threepence, and its size sixteen pages octavo. It was filled with readable matter of a miscellaneous kind, chiefly written by the brothers, who were also the printers and publishers. They toiled sixteen hours a days, but without reward, for they recovered by the sale no more than the cost of printing and paper. But the experience gained must have been useful.

The *Journal* made its first appearance on Saturday, the 4th February, 1832. It began with four pages of newspaper size, gradually changing its form until it settled down to the sixteen large octavo pages of the present day. It involved no romantic struggles, or ups and downs—always the chief difficulty was how to supply copies fast enough. The steam-press for what is called "book-work" had not

then been set up in Scotland, and it required many days to print thirty thousand copies of a large sheet by means of hand-presses, and in a few weeks fifty thousand copies of each number were required, which, at three half-pence a copy, must have left a handsome profit. In course of time the circulation went far beyond that number, and doubtless also the profit, although every line of the matter has always been paid for—in this particular, very unlike many of its competitors at the present day. Among the editors have been the late Leitch Ritchie, and the present editor of the *Cornhill*, Mr. James Payn.

TRADE VISITS TO LONDON AND GLASGOW

HAVING since boyhood's days entertained the idea that London was a city I ought to see, and having by the exercise of much economy and with a great fight, saved a sum of ten pounds, I was enabled in 1841, when I was but seventeen, to visit for the first time the great metropolis, bent on seeing its every place of interest, and of looking, even should it be at a distance, at the shining literary lights of the day ; above all, of seeing Paternoster Row, that renowned birthplace of books. Fresh from a perusal of the life of Lackington, I had determined upon seeing his " Temple of the Muses," which I had heard Mr. Adam Black describe, but which, while in London, I unfortunately forgot all about—I am not sure, indeed, if the place existed in 1841.

The appearance of "the Row" disappointed me sadly; it did not look very much better than some of the "closes" off the High Street of Edinburgh. By Mr. Tait's recommendation, I had gone to London in the steamboat that carried the magazine. It was on "Magazine day" I made my first appearance in "the Row,"—the day for the supplying of the trade, wholesale and retail, with the various periodicals then published, and this was, as a rule, fixed for the last day but one of the month.

No mid-monthlies were published in those days, and it would have been deemed a scandal had a country magazine, say *Tait's* or *Blackwood's*, not come to hand in proper time for distribution. Now there is no "Magazine day" of the old kind, but during my continuance in the trade it was a sacred institution. So long as I had any connection with Mr. Tait, his magazine was invariably up to time, but the first number published in Glasgow nearly missed fire in consequence of the unpunctuality of the paper-maker. On that occasion the bales containing the magazine were taken by myself to Ardrossan by railway, thence per

steamboat to Fleetwood, and thence to London by rail. I made my appearance at Stationers' Hall Court in the nick of time, with the bales in four hackney carriages, much to the astonishment of the assistants of Simpkin, Marshall & Co., who were actively engaged in preparations for the business of the two busy days required for the work of distribution.

At present every day may be called a "Magazine day," as some of these periodicals are issued and on sale long before the end of the month. Moreover, the circulation of several of the magazines now published is individually greater than the aggregate of all the magazines in existence fifty years ago ; so that a fixed day for magazine distribution would be an impossibility.

The London agents for *Tait's Magazine* and other publications were Messrs. Simpkin & Marshall, of Stationers' Hall Court, the greatest book distributors of that period. I expressed at one time to Mr. Tait my desire to go to London in order to court fortune ; he managed, however, to dissuade me. "I believe," he said, "I could get you into Simpkin's at a

salary of probably sixty pounds a year, which would be equal to fifty pounds here, but then the work is hard—very hard. I have heard it said that a young man is killed in Stationers' Hall Court every four months by the terrible work ; that is nonsense, of course, still, I would not recommend you to go to London yet—it is a city of terrible temptations to young men." Taking the advice of my kind employer in good part, I elected to remain in Edinburgh, but I must say that during my visits to London I did not find the assistants of Simpkin's look as if they were particularly hard worked.

I have mentioned in another chapter that letters and other small enclosures were put into all our parcels sent to London. Upon one occasion two bottles of whisky, insufficiently packed, were placed in the bale which contained the review copies of the magazine, and were smashed by the way. The keen noses of the editors detected the national odour which clung to their copies, and one began his notice,—“and here comes *Tait*, almost choking us with its strong smell of whisky ; why does not Mr. Tait send us the *aqua* in a quaich by itself ?”

One among the many persons to whom I was introduced by Mr. Heward of the *Examiner* (who was Mr. Tait's advertisement agent), during my second or third visit to London, was Douglas Jerrold, whom, however, I had previously seen in Edinburgh, when he paid a visit to Mr. Tait. I remember that visit, and his saying to Mr. Tait, as they were discussing the smells of Edinburgh,—“there is one smell, Mr. Tait, that has been most grateful to my nostrils; it is the smell which rises from the toddy-tumbler.” Mr. Heward, who seemed to be well acquainted with Jerrold, told me there was one thing on which he often expressed himself bitterly—the fact that his play of *Black-eyed Susan*, which (he said) brought thousands of pounds to the managers, and to him but seventy. Jerrold contributed to *Tait* under a pseudonym, and also to *Blackwood*. I met several of the *Punch* men during my occasional visits to London—Messrs. Mayhew and Shirley Brooks being of the number. The scene of such meetings was invariably in a tavern.

Mr. Heward took me round to all the princi-

pal publishers' offices, and to all the taverns and chop-houses which were the haunts of the people most interesting to me—the literary men and journalists and actors of the day. As he knew his ground I was fortunate, for besides many men whose fame has evaporated, we saw Dickens and Thackeray. And I saw many of the places, such as the "Cider Cellars," under the guidance of one of Mr. Heward's clerks—seeing everything, indeed, that a young man from the country likes to see in London.

Several other visits enabled me to become well acquainted with London, and to see some of the celebrities. It is not, perhaps, necessary for me to explain that my visits to the great people of the day were not made on terms of equality, so that when I called to see Mr. Joseph Hume in Bryanston Square, with a confidential message from Mr. Tait, I was not even asked to "take a chair"; nor did Mrs. Gore invite me to stay to lunch, although I was the bearer of a little cheque. When I handed a packet to Lord Brougham in the lobby of the House of Lords, all he said, on

looking at the superscription, was,—“ Ah ! from Tait, I see,” and with that observation he went into the House. One person, however, on whom I called during one of my trips to London was more than civil. Mr. Tait was very desirous of finding out who a certain correspondent might be who wrote striking articles signed “ Timothy.” When I called at his address, in a street off Holborn, and asked to see “ Mr. Timothy,” that gentleman courteously invited me to come upstairs. Mr. “ Timothy ” was exceedingly friendly, insisting on my “ breaking bread ” with him ; and we consumed together an extemporized lunch of Stilton cheese, bread and water-cress, with the grateful accompaniment of a tankard of Dublin stout. That “ Mr. Timothy ” was an Irishman there could be no doubt, but although I tried to “ pump ” him, I learned nothing as to his identity. I duly made the suggestion for a couple of articles for *Tait*, which I was empowered to make, and after an agreeable hour or two spent in chatting, I took my leave. Mr. Heward did not know “ Mr. Timothy,” but from my description thought he might be

a returned convict, who had at one time been well known on the London Press.

These visits to London were pleasant, being made under prosperous conditions ; there came a time, however, when I saw it under a different aspect. In truth there came a bad time for me : I went to London with the intention of setting fire to the Thames, and, like many other adventurers, I found that the river would not burn. All the avenues leading to the literary Temples of Fame seemed to be as crowded forty years ago as they are to-day. If to-day there are more aspirants, there is more work to be done, periodicals and newspapers having increased tenfold. It is not necessary for me to go over once again the old, old story of disappointed hopes, for it has often been done before, and done far better than I could do it. Many a time, when passing Anderton's Hotel, did I contrast with it the threepenny lodging-house in Pemberton Row, Gough Square, of which I was an inmate, and where one had to rise early to obtain the first turn at the wash-hand-basin.

During my six months' residence in Pem-

berton Row, I conversed in a friendly way with two literary men who, like myself, were "down on their luck," and glad of pen-work of any kind; one was a Dr. Rowley, a man of excellent parts, a good scholar, and a gentleman. My other friend in misfortune was a Mr. Watkins—the author of a considerable number of novels published on the penny-a-number plan, some of which, I was told, sold very well. Mr. Watkins was good at constructing a plot, but less successful in dialogue, and in delineation of character. At this time he was earning about a pound a week by writing novels of the "Dick Turpin" school for a well-known purveyor of that class of literature, who had the great merit of being a prompt paymaster. So soon as an author was thought sufficiently trustworthy to be engaged to write for him, this publisher supplied the paper on which the story must be written; it was ruled like a telegram-form, so that, when the "copy" was received, there should be no trouble in calculating the quantity, and payment was made on delivery of the manuscript. Some one afterwards put the matter into proper shape by

dividing it into the very short paragraphs then the fashion of "penny dreadfuls." They were issued in numbers, each of eight pages, with a woodcut perhaps for every two, and, "with number one will be given away number two," was the customary allurement.

Watkins, on some occasions, I noticed, "laboured" his work ; ideas, he said, were slow to come. "I know what I am driving at," he would say, "but can't get the right words." Often and often he would reverse his manuscript ; first of all, he would do about twenty lines of his chapter, writing them on lines wide apart, between which he interpolated others till he had matter for about half a page. In the process of copying out on a clean sheet, the "stuff," as he called it, would be expanded to double or treble the length, and so, by constant re-writing he in time produced his tale of literary bricks, which being finally transferred to the cross-lined paper, were taken to the publisher. The payment made for such work was, I believe, not illiberal, but although Watkins suggested that I should try my hand at it, he never told me the rate. An after-time friend

of mine, however, who had written in his young days for the same publisher a romance entitled "Secrets of the Sewers of London," told me that he would work hard for a week or ten days, and then, having a good few guineas to draw, was able to take a fortnight's leisure in Paris on the proceeds of his publisher's payment.

The mode in which my friend (afterwards a showman of celebrity) composed his story was thus related to me by himself:—"Having access to a set of Colburn's Novelist's Library, and having read most of the novels more than once, I selected from each its most sensational chapter, and altering the language, worked the incidents described into my chain of events"—and with considerable success, judging from the sale of the "Sewers."

The publisher ultimately made a large sum of money by his trade, but he was badly annoyed occasionally by men who imposed on him matter that had been barefacedly plagiarized from copyright sources. The plagiarism was sometimes discovered, and the novel had to be withdrawn from circulation after it had been

paid for. No wonder, therefore, that he had to be careful in his selection of authors.

Dr. Rowley's occupation at this time was the compilation of a couple of columns of "Answers to Correspondents," in the style of those given in the *Family Herald*. The payment for each instalment of two columns was but twelve shillings. Letters sent to the Editor seeking information were duly attended to, but as the two columns always required to be filled, answers had sometimes to be manufactured, and in that task my assistance was sometimes invoked, and this was generally rewarded by an invitation to share in a fish supper at Hungerford Market, Mr. Watkins making a third. On one or two occasions our party was joined by a person who rather forced himself upon us, neither Mr. Watkins nor Dr. Rowley seeming pleased at his appearance. Afterwards, on asking the reason of their repugnance to his company, the Doctor explained that the man was known as the "Bloodsucker," being editor of a filthy rag which dealt in scandal and blackmailing. Another of the characters who resided in the Pemberton Row private hotel was a "penny-a-

liner" of a most pronounced type,—clever, but drunken to the last degree of toleration. In his cups he posed as the "Fire-king"—the reporting of "dreadful conflagrations" being his favourite department. Another of the lodgers was a well-known orator—an unfrocked clergyman, I was told—who could be engaged, at a moment's notice, on any side of a question, his terms for a speech being "three half-crowns"; or he would engage to carry on a whole night's discussion with an opponent, in ten-minute speeches, either as a "Christian" or an "Infidel"—the fee being one guinea. He was sometimes sober enough for work for a period of four or five consecutive weeks, during which he told me he "coined money."

Some years before Mr. Tait thought of relinquishing business, I occasionally persuaded him to allow me to visit Glasgow with the view of making sales and collecting accounts. On these occasions I enjoyed myself exceedingly, "the trade" in that city being much given to hospitality. Mr. David Robertson, a well-known bookseller and publisher there, introduced me to one or two of his verse-

writing friends, who had been brought into notice by their contributions to "Whistlebinkie," a popular collection of homely verses, which enjoyed, and still enjoys, a considerable circulation. Mr. Robertson was the projector and publisher (and editor also, I believe) of a capital collection of humorous Scottish anecdotes and witty sayings which for many a day was a household book in the West of Scotland called "The Laird of Logan." Robert Chambers was a "Whistlebinkie" man, while others, such as Charles Grey, David Vedder, and James Ballantyne (the writer of a once highly popular song, "Ilka blade o' grass has its ain drap o' dew") were well known in Mr. Tait's shop as authors of volumes of poetry. I did not find a great demand in Glasgow for Mr. Tait's publications, nor, at such private houses as I visited, did I observe many evidences of book-buying. At one supper-table a discussion arose regarding one of Burns's poems, but the point remained unsettled, for there was no copy of Burns in the house.

The eating of many pies and the drinking of

much ale and porter in public-houses and pie-shops was the habit in the minor literary men of Glasgow in the forties. Several of these "howffs" were situated in queer corners, known only to their frequenters, who sometimes stayed carousing for the round of the clock—from noon till midnight.

An institution which I was made free to visit while in Glasgow was a "Grill club," situated in a court off Argyle Street. Business began at noon, the rule being that each member as he entered ordered a gill of whisky, one-third of which he took to himself, the remaining two-thirds being dealt round in drops among the assembled members. The sederunt lasted for two hours, the members coming and going during that time, exchanging pleasantries and the news of the day.

During my later visits to Glasgow, I made a point of calling on Mr. Peter MacKenzie, then well known as an Editor and proprietor of the *Reformer's Gazette*, which he conducted, as even his political opponents admitted, with great vigour and ability from the year 1837 onwards. He was a friend of Mr. Tait, there

being a strong bond of union between them, inasmuch as both had been actively concerned in the exposure of the detestable "Government spy system" (directed against the Chartists and Reformers generally), and out of which exposure arose a famous action, known as "*Richmond v. Simpkin and others*"—the defendants being Simpkin, Marshall & Co., as agents for *Tait's Magazine*. Mr. Tait described Mr. MacKenzie to me as "a most conversible man," and this I found him. As a journalist he was exactly suited to the stirring times of which I speak; but when things quieted down, he and his paper were left stranded.

Peter MacKenzie became an editor fifty years too soon. To-day he would have been in his element in what is called the "New Journalism." He was apt in ferreting out and exposing "jobs" and "abuses." One of his triumphs was the exposure of a bogus Insurance Company. So far as I know, Mr. MacKenzie was never the recipient of a testimonial for any of these labours, but he was not slow to suggest beneficences to others. It was owing

to his exertions that the impoverished widow of Papillon the French chemist—who had been brought from Rouen to teach the art of Turkey-red dyeing, which has helped to enrich the West of Scotland—was endowed with a comfortable annuity. In addition to much journalistic work, Mr. MacKenzie found time to compile several volumes dealing with the local history of Glasgow.

Another and more distinguished citizen of Glasgow whom I had the pleasure of knowing was Professor Nichol, then Regius Professor of Astronomy at the University, author of the "Architecture of the Heavens" and the "Phenomena of the Solar System" (the latter published by Tait), and one of the most brilliant men, scientifically and socially, of his generation. I was so fortunate as to become installed in his good graces by the interest I took in the getting up of his book on the "Solar System." His brother, Mr. William Nichol, at the time an artist of note in Edinburgh, prepared the plates for the "Architecture of the Heavens," but the illustrations for the "Solar System" were prepared by Mr. Schenk, a well-known

lithographer. I had the good fortune to detect a serious blunder in one of the plates at an early stage of the printing, a feat which led the author of the work to make a little hero of me, and when the Professor was the guest of Mr. Tait for a few days he insisted on my being asked one morning to breakfast, and one evening to supper, that he might talk with "that clever lad"—myself to wit! Naturally I felt much honoured and gratified. Of his lectures at the Philosophical Institution De Quincey observed to Mr. Tait—"Nichol is in himself a constellation; he possesses learning, rhetoric and a forceful elocution which takes his audience captive." Dr. Nichol was, in addition to being one of the most learned and capable astronomers of his day, a "literary man" of wide culture, and so practical in handling his pen that he was able to disport himself in an extensive arena. I remember a clever but rather eccentric Edinburgh literary lady telling Mr. Tait that she had, in a dream, been careering through space, mounted on a broomstick side by side with the Professor, who entertained her during the long journey they

made with his brilliant star-talk. "We had just got the length of the New Planet when I awoke, and I was so sorry to find my journey had been all a dream." At the early age of fifty-five the brilliant Professor died, all too soon for science and his country.

Another of my memorable Glasgow acquaintances of that day was Charles Mackay, then the editor of the *Glasgow Argus*—a paper long ago defunct. He afterwards edited various periodicals, to which he invited me to contribute—but as he has written his own autobiography, I need only add that I always found him a pleasant companion and a copious talker.

When "travelling" in Glasgow or other towns, I always bore in mind the good advice of my friend, Mr. James Knox (of Sutherland & Knox), who had himself been "on the road." "Never sit sotting in your hotel of an evening," said he, "go rather to the theatre or to a concert, it is pleasant and cheaper in the end, than sitting drinking in your hotel or playing billiards. You will find yourself brighter in the morning; but when you are invited to supper, beware of Glasgow punch; it is a fascinating compound,

but usually exacts the penalty of a severe headache in the morning from the unwary?" Mr. Knox was a shrewd man of the world, and, in his later years in business in Edinburgh, acted as a confidential accountant, especially in regard to literary matters and publishers' accounts. "Alick's," as the Theatre Royal in Glasgow was then familiarly called, I frequently visited. Mr. Alexander, the manager, was a remarkable "character," and a versatile actor; but when he was on the stage he kept an eye on his audience, which, on occasion, treated him with so much familiarity that he not infrequently felt obliged to interrupt the play and make a speech to "the gods." But "Alick" was always a favourite. He had risen by the usual degrees from the "penny gaff" to the proprietorship of the Theatre Royal in Glasgow, and was one of the very few men in his profession who retired from it with a fortune.

There was another theatre in Glasgow in those days, the well-known David Prince Miller having set up the "Adelphi" on the Green. It was but a wooden building, but that did not prevent Mr. Macready and Miss Faucit from

appearing on its stage. John Henry Anderson, who called himself "the Wizard of the North," also built a theatre in Glasgow in those days, but it was not a success.

"The Shakespeare," situated in the classic region of the Saltmarket, was the Glasgow "Music Hall" of that period. When I first visited it "Johnny" Murgall was the star of the night, playing a scene in dumb show with much ability. He was a prodigious favourite in Glasgow, drawing great houses. Having gone to Melbourne at the time of the great gold discoveries, he made money there, and when he returned, he was reported to be the richer by several thousand pounds; but when "Johnny" died, shortly after, no trace of his money could be found; and to this day there is a "Murgall Mystery," for the man lived soberly, and was no spendthrift. He invariably carried his money in large notes, concealed in some part of his dress, and it has been supposed that when his clothes were sold the money went, unsuspected, with the bargain.

SCOTTISH CELEBRITIES AND "CHARACTERS"

"Do you see that little sharp black-a-vised man there, crossing from the Mound?—that is Lord Jeffrey; that other little man with the big head, behind him, is Lord Cockburn; and the tall man he is walking with is Thomas Maitland of Dundreinnan, and he's sure to be a paper-lord [Judge] himself some day, if he lives long enough."

These remarks were addressed to me by a man who knew everybody, as we were walking in Princes Street one fine afternoon. He would have pointed out to me other celebrities had he not been interrupted by John Howell, whom I afterwards knew very well.

Howell was clever, and if he could have settled his mind to any one pursuit might have made a name in it. But he preferred to be

known as a "Johnny A'-thing" ("Jack-of-all-trades"), and he really was a most ingenious person, and possessed of very considerable inventive and constructive powers. He was consequently much employed in out-of-the-way jobs which regular tradesmen would not venture on. Among his enterprises was the building of a Roman Galley, which he exhibited publicly in "The Saloon" at 11, Hanover Street, describing it to a large number of spectators invited to see it. He was sure men could fly, if the proper kind of wings were made for them; he made a pair, and, having put them on, leaped from a platform erected behind Marshall's Panorama on the Mound; and, to no man's surprise save his own, came to grief. Robert Chambers, who took considerable interest in Howell, once paid him by cheque for some service. The cheque was payable to bearer, and when Howell was asked to endorse it he could not remember his own name. Fortunately, while he was trying hard to recall it, an acquaintance entered the bank, and his salutation of "How do you do, Mr. Howell?" ended the difficulty.

In my young days, as before and ever since, Princes Street, which Carlyle called "the brightest gangway," was *the* Edinburgh promenade. The actors and actresses especially used to display themselves there. Being not a little stage-struck in those days, many a time did I utilize my dinner-hour by lingering about till they came on the scene. "That's Lloyd," some one would say, or "There's the manager," or "Here comes Miss Nicol"; and then might appear, perhaps, the famous "Bailie" of "Rob Roy"—

"As in Macklin you find
The Jew that Shakespeare drew ;
So in Mackay you likewise find
The Bailie of Sir Walter's mind."

For many years I watched the processions of local celebrities that filed along the street. Professors and students, their lectures finished ; Judges, the host of Advocates and Writers to the Signet, coming leisurely into view as they crossed the valley from the old town by way of the North Bridge, and mingled in the passing stream of ladies shopping, made a fine show. As the afternoon went on the scene became

more animated. After sunset, when there were fewer people to be seen, the old town began to be lighted up, and the scene became picturesque indeed ; while the sky-line produced by the fantastic gables and roofs, when a bright moon was shining high over all, had charms even for persons whom the gods have not made poetical. I speak in the past tense, but it is equally true of the present.

“ How this street has changed ! ” said lately a one-time resident, who had returned after having been for long a dweller in a foreign land ; when I left Edinburgh there were few shops west of Frederick Street, main-door houses and common-stairs were then the rule ; now hotels, clubs and fine shops have taken their place.” It is indeed changed ; for I do not think there are more than four of its shop-keepers’ names in the directory for 1890 which were in that of 1837.

On the same day that my friend pointed out Lord Jeffrey in Princes Street, we were so fortunate as to encounter in our walk three of the most “ kenspeckle characters ” of Edinburgh—“ Watty,” “ Kate Dalrymple,” and

“Doctor Syntax.” “Watty”—his surname I never knew—was an itinerant poet, an improvisatore. He wore a patchwork coat of many colours, made up for him annually, it was said, by a benevolent tailor of the city. This wandering poet was always ready, never halting for a rhyme, and never sparing any one who offered an opportunity for his doggrel—either from his being a person of eminence, or from the peculiarity of his person, or the cut of his coat. Here is one of “Watty’s” impromptus, which lingers in my memory :—

“This day you’re all abroad, yourselves to show,
The atmosphere suits fine, the air is all aglow ;
Now comes our good and tall Miss Sinclair,
And passing in his cart see Jamie Tod the tinkler.”

“Kate Dalrymple” was the “by-name” of a person who occasionally ventured into Princes Street, but who, as a rule, preferred the less fashionable parts of the city. He was a singer of songs, and of one song in particular, that one from which his nickname was derived, “Kate Dalrymple,” which he sang remarkably well. It was reported (as usual) that “Kate” was a person of good family who had dissipated

his means : he was "blind-fair," almost an albino, and was always dressed in a red coat.

The appearance of "Doctor Syntax" (whose proper name was Sheriff) was remarkable—tight-fitting knee-breeches, black stockings and buckled shoes, a loose coat and very low-crowned hat—a rough copy of Rowlandson's familiar conception. He dashed along Princes Street looking exactly the "half-daft" person he was known to be. Syntax was ever in evidence, in lecture-room and church. The first time I saw him was in St. Cuthbert's. He was seated in a front pew, with a small candle burning beside him, the afternoon being dark. He was a tolerable artist ; lived a solitary life, and was wont to dwell on certain real or imaginary grievances which he related to all who would listen.

These are but three of the many "characters" prominent in Edinburgh in the thirties and forties. One of the most striking figures of those days was Professor Wilson, "Christopher North," but his lion-like appearance has often been described and its memory perpetuated by his statue in the Princes Street Gardens. I

am unwilling, however, to leave altogether unnoticed a figure which so filled my youthful eye ; and before passing on am fain to reproduce here my impressions of Profesor Wilson's funeral, which I attended, although the words have already appeared in print :—

“He was carried from his house in Gloucester Terrace to his grave in the beautiful Dean Cemetery on 7th April, 1854. I saw there a great assemblage of men distinguished for intellect, for rank and for wealth, and crowds of his old students who had come to do honour to the Professor whom they had loved as well as honoured. Others were there of humbler mien : there was a red-eyed, depressed-looking fencing-master with whom ‘Christopher North’ had had many a bout at single-stick. Jemmy Skinners, a poor waif of the livery stables, to whom Wilson had been kind, followed the hearse ; and a famous breeder of ‘Dandie Dinmonts,’ from Liddisdale, in whose house Wilson in the day of his hot youth had often bivouacked during his Border angling expeditions. An old proof-reader of the Ballantyne Press who had passed through his

hands all the proofs of 'Christopher in his Sporting Jacket,' came, unbidden, in his suit of sables, to tender respect to one whom all in 'Paul's Works' had liked and admired. There was also at the funeral an old servant of the University, whose eyesight had faded away, to whom Wilson had read, when he had time, a daily chapter of the Bible ; and there was likewise among the mourners an old 'publican and sinner,' at whose house the youthful barrister, long before he assumed the decorous cloak of the grave Professor, had held 'high jinks' and drunk whisky-punch with Lockhart and others of the set till cock-crow.

"Old servants, old stablemen, old porters, old soldiers and old sailors, were all seen in the motley funeral company. Carlyle, notable breeder of dogs, was there ; 'Dandy,' great at 'busking' flies, had come all the way from Kelso ; and from far-away Windermere, an old boatman who had many a time rowed with and against 'the Professor.' When the funeral was over tears were in many unaccustomed eyes, and there can have been few among the mourners who did not feel that the earth had

closed that day over a man, the like of whom they would not know again.


“No one who saw Professor Wilson in the prime of his days, let me say about the year 1838, could possibly forget him. He was all over, and he looked it, head to foot, a man, living intensely his own particular life, breathing to-day an atmosphere of letters and philosophy, while to-morrow he might be seen breasting a Highland hill or fording a brawling mountain stream; to-night the glory of a party of intellectual athletes, to-morrow a cherished guest in a gipsy encampment. But however great Wilson might be as a giant among his students in the Moral Philosophy class-room, he was seen to the greatest advantage in the country; with his feet firmly planted on the purple heath, and with the sights and sounds of nature around him. There, he was ‘Christopher North.’”

Although less known to the outer world, Lord Robertson was one of Edinburgh’s best-known men, and many a hat was raised as he passed along Princes Street. I shall never forget the first time I saw him; it was on a

bright summer Saturday afternoon on the lawn of a country house near Edinburgh, whither I had been sent with a proof, for the return of which I had to wait. There was a large garden party, for whose amusement Lord Robertson, during the hour I was kept sitting in a summer-house eating pears, performed a mock Italian Opera, taking all the parts in turn, and dancing an occasional *pas seul* or performing a terrific combat on the whale-bones of an umbrella. I was at least as much delighted and amused as the guests, and my pleasure was enhanced by the pears, and by the sixpence with which I was presented. I saw his Lordship again at the Dickens dinner, when by the kindness of the purveyor I got a seat in the fiddlers' gallery, and heard his versatile Lordship in an eloquent and feeling speech propose the memory of Sir Walter Scott. I believe that a little volume—and not so little, either—might be filled with Robertsonian Reminiscences, but it is my business to speak only of that which I know. He was a figure both brilliant and much esteemed in the times I am writing about. It was of him that

Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe said, "his bow was bent with humour, and his arrows tipped with wit." His epitaph was written for him, long before it was needed, by John Gibson Lockhart :—

"Here lies that peerless paper-lord, Lord Peter,
Who broke the laws of God, and Man, and Metre."



I must not dwell on Princes Street much longer, though every stone of it forms a coigne of vantage from which to see some notability. Here, for instance, comes kindly David Dickson, minister of St. Cuthbert's, a man who was greatly liked and respected by his contemporaries. I once heard him tell Mr. Tait some characteristic stories, of which I took a note at the time.

"Weel, Jenny," said the doctor to one of his parishioners who had a common failing, "can you tell me where all drunkards will go to?" "Oh, 'deed can I, doctor," said the woman; "they will just gang to the nearest change house (public-house)."

Another "bedside story" was of a parishioner who knew she was dying, but who persisted in

worrying herself about things of the world. At last, in order to pacify her, her husband (a carrier) said, "Maggie, my woman, dinna fash yoursel' about worldly maitters : listen to the minister about yer hinner end, and as sure as death, I'll gie ye a grand funeral."

Nothing of interest has been left to me to relate about the Judges, except, perhaps, that it was once my duty to run after one of them to obtain payment of an account due to Mr. Tait. The hunt occupied me, at intervals, a long time, a variety of excuses being offered for non-payment, until a lawyer's clerk of my acquaintance advised me that the best place "to nail" his Lordship was at the Court, and it was in one of the private rooms of the Parliament House that I obtained payment of that book-bill. Gossip was always busy about his Lordship's unpunctuality in money matters, and laid the blame on his wife.

Thomas Maitland (afterwards Lord Dundrennan), Lord Fullerton, and Lord Cockburn were wedded to three sisters. All were on the bench at the same time, and all were customers of William Tait, as was also the

Lord Justice Clerk of those days, John Hope, who used to preside in awful majesty in the High Court of Justiciary. His Lordship was "jumped" into his great position without going through the customary experience of being Lord Advocate ; nor had he ever sat as "Lord Ordinary." He was the most tremendous Tory who sat on the bench in what may be called modern times ; and I have heard him say that he never read a newspaper.

In my young days the Misses Sinclair, of Ulbster, were well known in Edinburgh, as, indeed, were all the members of the Sinclair family. Miss Catherine Sinclair was an authoress of some renown, "Modern Accomplishments," "Scotland and the Scotch," and other books of hers enjoying a large circulation. In my day Miss Catherine was an occasional visitor at Mr. Tait's, her books being well spoken of in his Magazine. I have a distinct recollection of having seen her famous father * in a bookseller's shop ; that would probably be a year or two before his

* Sir John Sinclair, Bart., projector and editor of "The Statistical Account of Scotland," 1791-1799.

death ; what I particularly remember is my telling the lady to whom I officiated on the occasion as messenger that I had seen a giant !—for Sir John, I believe, stood six feet six inches in his boots. None of the members of his family, son or daughter, measured less than six feet ; and it used to be said of Sir John that among his other benefactions to his country, he bestowed on it forty feet of daughters. But he did much more than that for his country. He was a remarkable man, highly practical as well as imaginative, and enthusiastic in all his undertakings. Among the legends which gathered about him was one which told how he once had some sheep clipped at sunrise, and wore a coat made from their wool at a party on the same evening. Miss Catherine Sinclair always took a kindly interest in the charitable institutions of Edinburgh ; she initiated and prosecuted many good works, and well deserved the monument which has been erected to her memory in the city for which she did so much.

Were this chapter not already too long, I might relate the story of my first experience of

Lord Jeffrey, when in the enjoyment of my earlier summers I was "nabbit," in company with some companions of like age, bird-nesting in the woods of Craigcrook, and received a solemn rebuke from the laird, sitting, not *in banc*, but on his lawn.

I should have liked to say something, too, of good old Dr. Neill, of Canonmills, at whose pretty cottage I was wont to deliver *Tait* every month, and to whose printing-office in the Old Fish Market Close I used occasionally to carry proofs, and next door to which, in after years, I had a printing and publishing office of my own. Personally, Dr. Neill was perhaps more famous as an amateur horticulturist than as a printer, although his printing-office is still celebrated. In it was printed, by the Messrs. Fraser, the two latest editions of the "Encyclopædia Britannica." It was Dr. Neill who may be said to have transformed the Nor' Loch into Princes Street Gardens. Canonmills Cottage, when the Doctor lived in it, was likened to "a jewel in a swine's snout," so beautiful were its gardens, and so unsavoury were its surroundings.

And I am fain to recall from the past the faces of Dr. Monro and his charming daughters, who were often to be seen amid the gay throngs of Princes Street. Sometimes the ladies would come into the shop to borrow our key to the Princes Street Gardens. On one occasion they asked Mr. Tait to allow me to take an important packet to their father, who had gone out to his country house at Craighlockhart, about three miles from the city, and I had instructions that, if he was not at Craighlockhart, I was to "follow and find him." He was not at home, and I finally ran him down at Redhall, the neighbouring seat of his son-in-law, Mr. Inglis. Returning with me to his own house, Dr. Monro sent me into the garden, and told me to eat as many gooseberries as I could manage, till he sent for me, a behest which I obeyed very zealously, not omitting, however, to admire the beautiful flowers and shrubs, most of them planted with the Doctor's own hands, for he was a keen practical florist. He had succeeded his father as Professor of Anatomy in the University of Edinburgh, father and son, between them,

filling the office for more than a century. The son was in the Chair during the Burke-and-Hare period, and was much abused, as having been a dealer in "burkit bodies"; it was Dr. Knox, however, who was most obnoxious to the public in connection with that bad business.

SOME EVENTS

“BURNS Festivals” are nowadays common enough all over the world, but it was not so in my young days. My first appearance at one of these merry meetings was under the auspices of the overseer of Mr. Tait’s printing-office. The supper took place in the old “York Hotel,” near the University; none but Scotch dishes were placed on the table, and toddy was the only beverage. The “great chieftain of the pudding race,” of course, and a sheep’s-head pie were the *pièces de résistance*. But the night was not entirely devoted to eating and drinking—we had song, speech and story, several of the orations being marvels of eloquence, as I thought. ‘Burns, the man and his works,’ was, of course, the theme, but there was then, I remember, more said than at present-day festivals of the weaknesses of the man. The

later fashion is the better, for more than enough has been written and spoken about "the sins of Burns," and the public can dispense with further apologies.

Two or three of those who took part in the "York Hotel" banquet were "characters," and in consequence were allowed great latitude in speech and song—especially in song, one of these gentlemen insisting on giving, several times in the course of the night, a few supplementary verses of his own composition, additions which were not altogether for edification.

One of the notable events of my 'prentice-days was the great "snow-ball riot" which took place between citizens and students—"Town and Gown" as it is called in England—and which for a time was the cause of much ill-feeling. It came off in the beginning of 1838, and was a more than nine-days wonder. In the course of my message-going, I took care to see as much of the fun as possible. At first the affair was a mere "bicker," but it soon went far beyond that. The police apprehended several of the students, who subsequently obtained their liberty, on the intercession of about fifty

other students, who, along with the prisoners, pledged their honour not to resume the warfare. No sooner, however, were the prisoners released than they met in the quadrangle of the College and resolved to renew the disturbances on the following day, and to arm themselves with bludgeons as well as snow-balls. They were as good (or as bad) as their word, and the riot had to be ended by the magistrates calling out a detachment of soldiers, which took the College quadrangle by storm. Even then, however, it was not quite over, for during the whole evening the students paraded the streets in the same defiant way as on that preceding, with a large crowd at their heels shouting and hallooing. A scuffle between students and crowd occasionally broke out, and a number of windows were broken, but no serious disturbance took place. There followed, of course, the trial of the ring-leaders, and the excitement effervesced in pamphlets, poetical squibs, and caricatures. Had the fire-engines been called out at the beginning the disturbance might have been ended in ten minutes.

I remember taking an intense interest in

what was called the "Pie-row." It had been resolved that, in honour of the Queen's marriage (February 10th, 1840), an entertainment should be given to the poor of Edinburgh, out of the profits of an upper-class half-crown banquet of wine and cake. The surplus was to be expended in providing "a mutton pie, a pint of porter, and a roll of bread" for each "poor person," and Mr. Spence, the famous pie-man of Hunter Square, was the contractor. The distribution was appointed to take place in the Green Market, the site of which is now occupied by the terminus of the North British Railway. The people were invited to be present at one o'clock, at which hour the place of rendezvous was densely crowded. The arrangements, however, were utterly inadequate ; and when the three or four waggons came on the scene laden with the materials of the promised feast, the mob made an ugly rush and "grabbed" whatever they could lay hands upon. When those in the immediate vicinity of the carts had eaten as many of the pies as they could, they began to toss the remainder to their friends on the outskirts of the crowd, and

for a few minutes it rained pies and rolls, hundreds flying through the air at once! The policemen, powerless to preserve even the semblance of order, had no alternative but to aid in the work of tossing the pies over to those who could not get closer to the waggons. Some gentlemen who made an effort to preserve order, cut a sorry figure as they emerged from the fray, and, as may be supposed, hundreds of poor people got neither pie, bread, nor beer. But it was all very good fun for a boy like myself.

I have already mentioned that I was lucky enough to see the Dickens banquet of 1841, from the best of all possible points of view—the fiddlers' gallery. It was the first public banquet I had seen, and I enjoyed immensely both what I saw and what I heard. Dickens was then as popular as his novels, and nowhere can he and they have been more popular than in Edinburgh. The chairman was Professor Wilson ("Christopher North"), and the speech in which he proposed the health of Dickens was worthy of both. Dickens surprised and delighted the Edinburgh folks by the variety

and excellence of his oratory. He made three several speeches, all good, and to the point. I well remember the concluding lines of his reply to the toast of his health :—" I believe I shall never hear the name of the Capital of Scotland without a thrill of gratitude and pleasure. I shall love, while I have life, her people, her hills, and her houses, and even the very stones of her streets. And if in the future works which lie before me you should discern—God grant you may !—a brighter spirit and a clearer wit, I pray you to refer it back to this night, and point to that as a Scottish passage for ever more. I thank you again and again, with the energy of a thousand thanks in each one, and I drink to you with a heart as full as my glass, which will be far more easily emptied, I do assure you."

The Queen's visit in 1842 formed a great event in the annals of the city. Edinburgh went mad over it to an extent sober Scots had never done before. George the Fourth, when he came in 1822, had a splendid reception, but it was as nothing to that accorded to the young Queen. Elaborate arrangements were made

to greet her Majesty, but the best laid schemes of Provost and Bailies, like those of mice and men, "gang aft agley," and so it happened with the Queen's visit.

Arriving—the Queen had come by sea—at an unexpected hour, none of the authorities were at hand to greet her, and her Majesty had to make her way to Dalkeith Palace (the seat of the Duke of Buccleuch) without the intended welcome and escort. A fog having fallen on the Leith Water, the Queen's ship could not venture to Granton, and so lay behind the island of Inch Keith all night, coming into port early in the morning, when no one in authority was afoot. As may be supposed, the Lord Provost (Forrest) and Magistrates were unmercifully "chaffed" upon being caught napping. There was ready to hand the old ditty about "Johnny Cope" to be parodied, and this was sung on the streets for several days—

"Hey, Jamie Forrest are ye waukin' yet?
Or are ye snorin' in yer bed?
Sit up, my man, for the drums do beat,
And meet the Queen in the morning."

“The Disruption” was a great event in the days of my youth, but it would make too long a story. With the Moses who led out the hosts which made the Free Church of Scotland—the famous Dr. Chalmers—I had the honour of a slight acquaintance. He lived at Morning-side, and often, as I was on my way home, I used to see him scanning the dial of the village clock. I don’t think he carried a watch, and as I was myself the proud possessor of a “gold Geneva,” I was able, one evening, upon being asked, to tell the Doctor the exact time. After I had done so he looked attentively at me. “Surely,” he said, “I have seen you before; were you in the church on Sabbath, when I preached?” “Yes, sir,” I replied, “and the Sabbath before that as well.” “That is where I have seen you, then.” “Yes, sir, I always go to hear you, when I know you will preach,” was my prompt (and truthful) reply. I delighted in the Doctor’s preaching, and have sometimes walked half a dozen miles to hear him. The next time I encountered the great man, he shook hands with me, and asked what my occupation was, and who my parents

were, and seemed pleased to be told that I was in the office of *Tait's Magazine*. He asked me on that occasion to walk with him to his house, and, taking me into his library, entertained me for an hour with delightful conversation, not one word of it having reference to "the Kirk." When Dr. Chalmers died, I was not in Scotland, but in a few days after my return I walked out to the Grange Cemetery, where he was buried, to look upon his grave. I spoke to one of the grave-diggers, but could get little out of him but this—"The Doctor's funeral was the biggest that's ever been seen in Edinburgh."

An event of considerable political interest, which took place in August 1844, was the laying of the foundation-stone at a monument to the Scottish political martyrs* of the foot of the Calton Hill. Joseph Hume performed the ceremony, a large body of enthusiastic Edinburgh politicians having assembled on the occasion. Mr. Tait had some time

* Muir, Palmer, Skirving, Gerrald, and Margarot, who in 1794 were sent to Botany Bay, on account of their advanced political opinions.

previously published a pamphlet which obtained a great circulation, giving biographical notices of the "martyrs," for it is now generally allowed that the men were unfairly tried and unjustly punished. Mr. Tait worked hard in getting up the memorial, and hard work was needful, for the response was slow and the subscriptions niggardly ; the art of collecting money for such affairs not being so well understood half a century ago as it is to-day. So strongly ran the feeling of some citizens against its erection, that they applied to the Court of Session for an "Interdict." This, however, was refused, and Lord Jeffrey delivered the judgment in a speech memorable for its liberality and good sense. As Mr. Tait's deputy I placed a jar containing documents in the cavity of the stone—and the proceedings were wound up by a dinner to Mr. Hume in the evening. What most attracted my attention in connection with the ceremony was that one of the press-reporters was expert enough to take down a full note of Mr. Hume's address in long hand.

LITERARY, LEGAL, AND OTHER HOSPITALITIES "SIXTY YEARS SINCE "

THE Modern Athenians have never been deficient in the virtue of hospitality. Beginning with breakfast—a mode of entertainment much in favour with Sir Walter Scott, who maintained that a breakfast party "saved wine and wassail" (although the Lord of Abbotsford was no niggard when the wine cups were on his table). Literary and other travellers used to be surprised and delighted with the tables liberally supplied with an appetite-provoking variety of fish, flesh, and fowl, hot and cold; with rolls, scones, coffee, tea, delicious cream, and especially with a condiment described by an old-time tourist, "a bitter-sweet, but most delightful compound of orange skins and juices, called 'marmalade,' which we never see in England."

At the opening of the Court of Session, the judges and high officials are always entertained at breakfast by the President. In a publication of many years ago, called *The Whim*, only a few numbers of which were issued, there appeared some rhymes descriptive of one of these feasts. The following lines being from memory, are not perhaps quite exact, but they convey an idea of the opening of the lines, which became highly personal before their end :—

“ Lord President Hope he fills the big chair,
 With smiles on his brow for those who are there ;
 Close by him sit Lords Balgray and Cockburn,
 Whose faces shine bright in the old Silver Urn,
 His Lordship presumes they like his good fare—
 There's plenty to eat and plenty to spare.”

The Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland entertains the ministers at “ breakfasts ” during the sittings of the Church Court. The Moderator does the same, and many of the hospitably inclined citizens of Edinburgh entertain country clergymen and other members of Assembly, at breakfast, as well as at dinner.

For Professors of the University to entertain their students to breakfast was, and still is, a recognized custom, happily so for many of the hungry lads who in my young days, at all events, seldom had another opportunity of making a "square meal."

But breakfast was by no means the only Edinburgh meal. Dinner-parties "were frequent and fine," not only "in the days of auld lang syne," but "from the year '30 to the year '49," as Professor Aytoun sang long ago in an unprinted squib. Some of the more formal feasts may have been rather "cold in their tone," but many of the legal and literary dinners given in the Scottish metropolis were wont to be distinguished by their hilarity and good fellowship.

In Lockhart's "Life of Sir Walter Scott," and in Sir Walter's "Diary," we read much of the dinner-parties of his period. Many of the table luxuries were then much cheaper than such things are to day. A hare, for instance, good enough for soup, cost rather less than eighteenpence, and the price of poultry was in proportion. The variety of to-day, however,

was wanting. The dinner *menu* of sixty years since was substantial. What Meg Dods called "kickshaws" were not as a rule so much considered ; in only a few of the best Edinburgh houses was an artist to be found who "understood" such frivolities.

Dinners *à la Russe* had not been heard of, and as most of the dishes were prepared under the immediate supervision of the lady of the house, entertaining was then a labour. On grand occasions the soups and sweets might be ordered from Aitchison or Stewart, well-known confectioners of the olden time, but the turbot would be boiled, and the "gigot" of Cheviot mutton would be cooked in the house, and generally some "side-dish" for which the house might be noted. And as everything had to be placed on the table, much ingenuity and pains, of which the hostess of to-day knows nothing, were expended on rendering them presentable.

Fifty years since nearly every house in Edinburgh where dinner-giving was a feature of hospitality, presented some speciality for the delectation of its guests. Judges as a rule gave good dinners, and some gave much of

their great minds to the business ; some went further and gave their hands. Here is a story of the time. In those days it was not illegal to bring away the "squabs" (young Solan geese) from their nests on the Bass Rock, and one hospitable judge used to treat his guests to these infantile sea-fowl, cooked in a manner that rendered them delightful ; but the culinary process was never revealed which made the chickens—ordinarily commonplace enough—so succulent and palatable. A brother of the bench, anxious to penetrate the mystery, interviewed the cook, and slipping a golden coin into her palm, said, "Tell me, my woman, how you make that delicious squab curry." "Eh, sir," was the reply, as her fingers closed on the largess, "I'm no able to tell you that, for his Lordship aye mak's it his ainsel'."

A judge who, in his time, attained a noble reputation as a dinner-giver, was Lord Gillies, of whom it was sung that he looked "smart in grey hat, with green umbrella in hand." There seemed to be always hastening to his house in York Place, day after day, a succession of message-boys from fishmongers, poulterers,

fruiterers, butchers, dairymen and wine-merchants, bearing supplies for his Lordship's commissariat. "Suppers, delightful, enjoyable, prolonged," also afforded Lord Gillies an acceptable mode of showing his hospitality. Mutton curries, stewed ribs of beef and roasted eels, were favourite dishes at these feasts, at which the decanters kept the wit flowing far into the small hours.

So thorough was his Lordship's determination to enjoy the good things of this life, that, when alone, or with only one or two boon companions, he would dine in the kitchen, watching attentively the operations of his cook as she deftly "brandered" a beef-steak or lamb-chop. "It needs a clever woman, well watched," he would say, "to cook a steak, or boil a potato to a turn."

Lord Robertson is alluded to elsewhere in this book, but he falls to be noticed again as a liberal purveyor of "wine and wassail." His Lordship's hospitalities, great and small, were much appreciated by all who were privileged to partake of them. At his parties the fun usually became "fast and furious," song, recita-

tion and speech being the order of the night, and Peter Fraser—"Peter of the Painch" as he was nicknamed by Sir Walter Scott—was often foremost in the fray. His drollery was reputed altogether inimitable by his contemporaries.

As historically interesting, I may mention that an Edinburgh poulterer of some sixty years ago used to tell a story about an Edinburgh lady who had received from a friend in England a brace of pheasants. The bird was so unfamiliar that the lady sent the brace she had received to be stuffed, as her cook maintained that "such bonnie birds couldna' be for eating." A learned member of the legal profession, who knew better what was "for eating" than the lady's cook, happened to be sitting in the bird-stuffer's room when the footman brought the birds, purchased them without the skins and feathers, of course, and at a dinner-party he gave next day, presented his guests with the novel dish of a pheasant dumpling, the first of the kind probably ever served in Scotland. When Muirhead, the game dealer, first offered snipe for sale in Edinburgh, few

could be found to purchase them, but crowds assembled to look at and examine the "lang-nebbit" curiosities.

Another Edinburgh tradesman of the period was the means of introducing to his customers a most succulent denizen of the deep, vulgarly called a "cock-paidle") (see "The Anti-quary"). Lord Murray, upon being asked by the tradesman in question, Dalziell, the fish-monger, to introduce the fish (the Lumpsucker) at his table, his Lordship good-naturedly consented, and his cook made a hit by sending it to table after it had been plain-boiled in seawater, accompanied by parsley sauce. The "cock-paidle" became for a time, in consequence of his Lordship's patronage, a favourite dish at "society dinners," cooked in different modes; it was baked in an oven, roasted before the fire, and occasionally cut in pieces and served with gravy, to which a good handful of chopped mint had been added. The lumpsucker was well known in many of the humble households of sixty years since before it began to be presented at fashionable dinner-tables. It is a first-rate table fish when

nicely cooked ; let me therefore recommend my readers to try it.

Some of the vegetables and fruit now common enough were not obtainable half a century ago. Some gentlemen used to "force" a few things in their hot-houses, and I remember seeing what was thought a novelty at the time, a box filled with strawberry plants (it would be in the year 1834-5) the fruit being ripe and beautiful. The fruit formed part of the dessert placed on the table of a well-known banker of Edinburgh on the occasion of a dinner-party, and the strawberries were meant to astonish the guests.

The dinners of well-to-do citizens of sixty (and much fewer) years ago were placed on the table in "courses," vegetables and all, the dissection of joint and fowl often enough giving those who carved them a bad quarter of an hour. Carving was then one of the accomplishments of a gentleman. A master in the Edinburgh Academy told me that, on one occasion when asked to carve a fowl at a supper-party, he was so annoyed by his lack

of skill that he lived on fowls for a month afterwards in order to learn the art.

A Glasgow merchant-prince, who one day called on Mr. Tait, greatly amused that gentleman by his artless prattle about the simple meal which satisfied him. "Give me," I heard him say, "a plateful of hare or turtle soup, a moderate helping of cod, with a dozen or so of oysters, then a cut from a good sirloin of beef or gigot of mutton, a bit of cabinet-pudding, a morsel of cheese, a stick of celery, a bottle of good port—and, I have dined, Mr. Tait, I have dined; that is really all I take, I assure you."

A word or two may appropriately be here said about the fish dinners, which have for many a long year been a feature of Edinburgh social life. So long as I can remember a fish dinner at Newhaven has always been looked upon as a feast worthy to be set before an honoured visitor. My own experiences do not extend further back than 1835, but long before then Newhaven fish dinners were of established reputation. Sir Walter himself is said to have officiated not unfrequently as the leader of a

merry expedition to the little fishing port. I heard "the Major" (Mr. Cartwright, a "reader" at Ballantyne's printing works) tell how that on one occasion "the great Unknown" arranged for a fish dinner to be given by the head of the department at his (Sir Walter's) expense, and whilst they were in the midst of their hilarity, the giver of the feast, accompanied by Mr. John Ballantyne, unexpectedly walked into the dining-room, and spent an agreeable half-hour with them, much to the gratification of the company.

In my young days, "Mrs. Clark's was the dining-house for all to whom the total of the bill" was not an object of great moment. There were other dining resorts, of course—perhaps half a dozen in all—where one could obtain a fish dinner or "fish tea." The scale of prices—as I have mentioned in my own 'prentice story—ranged from 9d. to 1s. 3d. per head! Those, however, were the days when a "muckle cod" would be carried to Edinburgh by a fish-wife and there be sold for a shilling or fifteenpence. In the thirties a turbot of no mean size was sold for a shilling, whilst a

"puir saxpence" would provide a good big lobster for the sauce. A "twa-pund haddie" could sometimes be had for "three bawbees." Sauce-oysters at sevenpence for a "fish-wife's hunder" (120) were to be had from a barrow in every Edinburgh street. Fish dinners are still served in Newhaven, but I do not think any of the Clark family are now to the fore, Mrs. Main, a daughter of Mrs. Clark's, on whom had fallen her gastronomic mantle, and who became lessee of "The Peacock," having retired. Dickens, John Blackwood, Macready, Sheriff Alison, Charles Kean, Buckstone the comedian, David Roberts the painter, Thackeray, Douglas Jerrold, the Howitts, the brothers Chambers, Lord Robertson, Charles Mathews, Frank Buckland, James Hannay, "Russel of the *Scotsman*," Henry Irving, and many other celebrities, past and present, were wont to delight in a fish dinner at Newhaven, despite the outside dirt and discomfort of the little town, and its "ancient and fish-like smell."

The Newhaven fish-wives—who has not been in love with "Christy Johnstone"?—have

always excited the admiration of visitors, especially the artists. George IV.—who was surely a *connoisseur*—when taken down *incog.* to the village by Sir Walter, declared he had never seen a handsomer set of women. The verdict pronounced by Dickens on the occasion of his first visit was—"This is immense! The service is not so fine as it is at Greenwich, but the fish! and the cooking!" Peter Fraser, the bookseller, who was the host of the day, had arranged for the two girls, who usually waited at Mrs. Clark's table, to dress themselves for the occasion in the picturesque costume of the fish-wives, so as the more to gratify the author of "Pickwick."

I recall the occasional most enjoyable auction-room dinners given by Mr. C. B. Tait about 1835-1845. These took place on occasional Saturday afternoons. Rough-and-ready meetings they were, often got up at an hour or two's notice, to admit of the presence of some passing celebrity—literary, musical, or dramatic. Many desired to be present on such occasions, but the company was usually restricted to "interesting" people—painters,

preachers, professors, poets, lawyers, literary men, comedians, a sprinkling of epicures.

I am able to speak of those Saturday dinners from personal knowledge, having on some two or three occasions been impressed into the service by Thomas Gulland, Mr. Charles Tait's factotum, who on the occurrence of such "ploys" performed the part of butler. My first duty was to rush through the city in a hackney-coach and collect the guests. Mr. Scott Moncrieff and his friend Mr. Murray, manager of the Theatre, as also Sir William Allan, the painter, had often to be sent for, also Mr. Lloyd, the comedian, Mr. Norrie, the painter, and, when in Edinburgh, some theatrical star, such as Charles Mathews. Then I would have to hasten over to Hewart's, perhaps to expedite them with the oyster-soup or the mulligatawny. A man who kept a cook-shop near the auction-room always supplied the fowls and ham—the latter usually baked in paste. Other portions of the dinner required to be collected from various places. A special feature of these impromptu dinners was the curry, of which there were usually two

or three kinds, prepared by an unattached East Indian expert. What his name may have been I never knew, but he was called "the Baboo," and was a *protégé* of Mr. Falconer, of Falcon Hall, a retired East Indian Civil Servant, who often employed him, and recommended him to his friends. His curried oysters, crab-claws, and ox-cheek, were famous in those days.

At these dinners the wines and liquors formed a chief attraction—whatever was accounted rich or rare, from "Imperial Tokay" to humble Edinburgh ale, was placed at the service of the guests. One invariable feature of the feast was cheese in great variety; some native, some foreign—never less, I think, than half a dozen kinds. The cheese-dishes passed round with the various decanters and black bottles, and were in constant demand. I also "dined" on these Saturday afternoons, not, of course, at the guest-table—but in a snuggerly in company with my friend Thomas, and on one of these occasions I enjoyed, and that greatly, my first glass of champagne. Of course, when I became a full-blown assistant in

the office of *Tait's Magazine*, Thomas lost my aid and my company, and I lost, in exchange for my dignity, many a treat, both material and intellectual.

Of the much feasting which went on in legal circles fifty years ago here is an illustration which I believe to be new. Mr. Ryan, at one time a print-seller in Hanover Street, and who had been butler to a popular county sheriff, told me about several "choice spreads" he had planned which were much enjoyed, there being first of all a good dinner, good dessert, and a plentiful supply of good wine ; then "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." There was nothing new in all that. The peculiarity of these feasts seems to have been that the guests who sat down to table invariably numbered eleven, neither more nor less, and that one of the guests—the odd man, apparently—was always one of the judges. Why eleven, and why only one judge, were points never explained to me, and my unaided intelligence has proved insufficient. The dinners were held successively in the diners' houses, but if these diners formed a club, I have not been

able to find out its designation. None of the persons I have asked had ever heard of these dinners of eleven.

Mr. James Ballantyne's "Waverley-Novel" banquets had, for the best of all reasons, been discontinued long before I had anything to do with the "commerce of literature." Nor were the "Candlemaker Row festivals," held in honour of the Ettrick Shepherd, continued after his death, though memories of both and their humours were common enough in "the trade" when I first entered it, and such reminiscences were eagerly received from the eye- and ear-witnesses. I never, during my service in Mr. Tait's warehouse, heard of any banquets to his authors of the kind reputed to have been in vogue in the days of Constable. The writers in *Tait's Magazine* were so scattered that it would have been difficult to bring any large number of them together. The "Blackwoodsmen," I believe, were often entertained by the hospitable editor and publisher, but I can give no particulars of these "Noctes," nor of the supper-parties given by Professor Wilson, which, as Professor Aytoun said, were

“full of mirth and full of go, and ever and always had been just so.”

The Royal Company of Archers, and the Honourable Company of Golfers used to exercise, and I fancy still exercise, a bountiful hospitality, whilst the Yeomanry Mess has always entertained liberally. The Merchant Company too, and other good old corporations, dine as well as ever.

What, perhaps, was peculiar to Edinburgh, is, that Banks and Insurance Offices feasted their friends; some of the Banks supplying their table on such occasions from their own great cellars of fine old wines. As the Town Council had been “reformed,” and had turned over a new leaf, the dinners of that body, or of its committees, were, at the time I am writing of, few and far between. But there had been much municipal “cakes and ale” in by-gone days. One of the city officers told me that he and two of his colleagues were, in the olden time, in the habit of “feasting and fuddling,” in the hotel selected for a magistrates’ dinner, for a week before and a week after the event.

II

The Supper-party was at one time the commonest form of Edinburgh festivity. They were given by all classes and were much enjoyed, one reason for their long-continued popularity was, doubtless, their being less costly than dinners, and also less formal. Ladies who did not care to "dress" to go out to breakfast, much preferred the evening to the morning meal—both being of an equally informal character. Bachelor revels, as a rule, were held in taverns which possessed "parlours" to be reserved for special parties, and every night some band of roysterers might be seen, or at any rate heard, enjoying themselves. Again, little clubs of youthful lawyers were accustomed to gather round the festive board at each other's lodgings "time about," when that was convenient. Supper dishes were usually at once spicey and inexpensive, such as broiled "Finnan haddies," eggs and bacon, devilled kidneys, curried rabbits, oysters in a

hundred "ways," "partan [crab] pies," baked crabs, minced collops, lobsters, anchovy toasts, Welsh rabbits—— but I have no memory and no room for a complete list of the savoury dishes which figured at old-time Edinburgh supper-tables. Bottled ale, Prestonpans table-beer, followed by whisky-toddy, were the usual accompaniments. Rich or "showy" people provided port and sherry, and even, on occasion, but rarely, claret and champagne. Lord Jeffrey's winter dinners, and summer "Saturday afternoons" at Craigcrook have been often written about, and one or two of his brethren of the Bench were celebrated for their "Saturday-night suppers," at which would assemble a party of a dozen or fifteen for three or four hours of more or less refined revelry. It is "gentlemen's parties" only to which I am referring. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe used to say,— "I am kept so busy eating other people's suppers, that I have no time to give any myself;" but he contrived, for all that, to entertain, occasionally, a select few of his friends, providing on such occasions some dainty of an unusual kind for their delectation. He was

famed for his excellent "devils," and claret. As Mr. Charles Tait once sang, after one of his little suppers,—

" Master Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe
Is less angelic than civil ;
He never gives us a tune on the harp,
But he makes a very good ' devil.' "

Professor Pillans, after he had gone to the University, was fond of having his old High School boys, as well as his students, to breakfast or supper almost daily. One year, when the good Professor had rented the farm-house at the foot of Blackford Hill—a place about two miles from Edinburgh—he did not relax his hospitality, but asked little parties of his students to come out to "take pot luck" with him two or three times a week. On one occasion, when half-a-dozen of these lads of meagre aspect were on the way to their Professor's feast, they attracted the attention of two "wits of the Parliament House" (a mythical class on which used to be fathered all Edinburgh jests, old or new). "Who can these hungry-looking fellows be?" said one of the wits to the other. "Oh," was the reply, "they

are evidently students on their way to dine with Pillans at Blackford ; he is Professor of Humanity, you know."

"An oyster supper such as we are now partaking of," said Sir Walter Scott, to one of his visitors (the poet Crabbe), "is one of our simplest forms of hospitality." At one time these toothsome morsels were delightfully cheap, and were always on sale at most of the Edinburgh taverns, or, as they were then called, "coffee-houses." In 1837 there was, however, one house solely devoted to the sale of oysters. It was kept by Mrs. Dow, and was situated conveniently close to the Theatre Royal, by the *habitudes* of which it was pretty well patronized. Another oyster-tavern was afterwards opened by a Mrs. Dewar in Waterloo Place. Oysters in numbers, almost incredible nowadays, were then consumed, and both houses in their time were favourite resorts of all classes especially at night ; but, as a general rule, the upper classes partook of their bivalves in the comfortable coffee-rooms of the houses which they "used," such as "Cork's" (the University tavern), the "Café Royal" or "Rainbow," and,

later on, the "Regent." Nothing more delighted strangers visiting the city than the abundant and cheap supply of these dainties, of which Peter Fraser once defied Dickens to eat a shilling's-worth at a sitting.

Dr. Robert Chambers, in his delightful "Traditions of Edinburgh," relates that oysters had been in evidence in the taverns of "Auld Reekie" for a century before his day, affording an excuse for many a merry meeting. Another feature of the period embraced in these recollections (1835 to 1845), was the sale of oysters in the streets, by young women, chiefly from a fishing place known as Fisher Row, practically a part of the town of Musselburgh. The musical proclamation of these fair oyster-merchants—"Caller Ou"—might any winter evening be heard throughout the city, and quickly, on demand, they would set down their creels, and deftly open a dozen of their shelly ware.

The Edinburgh oyster supper of fifty years ago was an inexpensive affair. The "whiskered pandores" of Prestonpans could, in those days, be enjoyed at the rate of tenpence for "a

board," with bread-and-butter *ad libitum* ! A board of oysters, it may be explained, ranged from thirty-six to sixty-six ; and " Firth of Forth natives " were usually served on the deep shell, and eaten without the aid of any condiments, their own gravy being thought sufficient by all who knew how to appreciate a good thing.

This chapter may be fittingly concluded with a little story that I heard told on one occasion in Mr. Charles Tait's auction-room. The wife of one of the most famous judges of the Court of Session, who flourished sixty years since, was of so exceedingly penurious a disposition, that she would provide nothing deemed respectable for the famous Saturday-night suppers at which his Lordship had been accustomed to entertain parties of a dozen or more of his friends of the bench and bar. His Lordship was driven to invent something which might atone for its cheapness by its novelty, and introduced a dish to his Saturday-night visitors, which made a great hit. He gave them black puddings ! and they were at once proclaimed to be delightful. Lord Parch-

ment's "B. P.'s" became the rage, large helpings being in demand. They were supplied by an old man who sold them *al fresco* in the High Street, near John Knox's corner, and his Lordship's cook knew how to send them up to table. With these puddings, a good supply of anchovy toast, and plenty of good claret, his Lordship happily managed to overcome his domestic difficulties, and without any check "to the feast of reason and the flow of soul." "Lord Peter's" *apropos* little verse may here be quoted—from memory, however, and probably not quite correctly, but it ran pretty much as follows :—

"You may talk of your turbots and curry so warm,
Your hams of Old York, and your turkey that's braised,
But in anchovy toast and good claret there's charm,
While for his black puddings his Lordship be praised."

The worthy pudding-merchant who supplied the judge's supper-table may be again briefly referred to. At one time his goods were in great request, and persons bought from him "on the sly," who did not like their marketing to be known. But not all his customers were snobbish—a messenger would come down

every day in the winter time from the Commercial Bank, then situated in the High Street, for a supply, and many of the old-fashioned merchants used to bestow their patronage openly on the old man, who sat near to the entrance of Oliver and Boyd's publishing warehouse at Tweeddale Court, his wares piled in a great basket. The result was that when this old pudding-merchant died, he was found to have accumulated a fortune of nearly four thousand pounds.

III

In the account given of my "'prentice days," I found it necessary to make some references to the Edinburgh taverns then doing business as places where hospitality was exercised by many gentlemen who probably were unable for various reasons to entertain their friends at home. The best in the days of my youth were undoubtedly the "Rainbow" and the "Café Royal," the latter of which, on another site, is still doing business. They were too

expensive to be frequented by any but the rich or the extravagant. The patrons of the "Café" sixty years ago were greatly given to sport: hunting and racing men were wont to meet and hold high revel over devilled bones and claret, a wine much in demand, and which was always "good at this house." Many of the wealthier merchants held their snug little dinners in "The Rainbow," the windows of which commanded a fine view of the butchers' "killing booths"—a site now occupied by the station of the North British Railway. Some years have elapsed since the premises occupied by the tavern named began to be utilized as a portion of a draper's warehouse, but in the palmy days of tavern life in Edinburgh, the "Rainbow" played a bustling part, one of its chief attractions being the dishes prepared by Kirsty Bell, who was famous for her "devils." And its cheese, lovingly kept and cared for, and dosed judiciously with ale or port, was a "speciality." So was the hock, which took rank with best bins of port at the "Café." Banquets and great political or literary dinners were usually held in the Royal Hotel, in Princes Street,

or in one of "Barry's Rooms" in Queen Street. It was in Barry's that Dickens was first fêted in Edinburgh, and it was in the "Royal" that Joseph Hume was entertained, on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of the Martyrs' monument.

The tripe-supper was best served at the "Guildford Tavern" in Register Street, and at "Ambrose's" in Gabriel's Road, famous as the scene of the "Noctes Ambrosianæ." At the last-named house of entertainment, the tripe was served in its natural state—at the "Guildford" it was served, as it came to be named, "à la De Quincey," viz., smothered in a thick white sauce, richly stocked with thin slices of well-boiled onions. "All sorts and conditions of men" supped on tripe at the "Guildford," and the "English Opium-Eater," very frequently when he was "lost," might have been found there. It was there, too, the proprietor of *Tait's Magazine* frequently entertained his literary and political visitors, among whom I remember William and Mary Howitt, Sir William Molesworth, Dr. Bowring, and Joseph Hume. "Prime Edinburgh Ale"—more like

the old-fashioned English Cottage Ale than "India Pale"—was usually the liquor consumed on those festive occasions, and if the sitting was prolonged to a late hour, a bowl of punch would follow, or perhaps a bottle or two of claret.

For epicures with light purses there were, of course, humbler houses of entertainment. In a house down a stair in Broughton Street, much frequented by booksellers' clerks, one might obtain, at the modest charge of sevenpence, a liberal helping from a succulent dish of what the proprietress called "salmon hash." It was better-known as "Tweed kettle," and it could be obtained all day long, hot or cold to taste. Shocking to relate, it could be got all the year round—no matter the season—and always excellently well cooked; the landlady, being a Kelso woman, was familiar with the fish and its capabilities. "Salmon hash" was served with the accompaniment of specially delicious flour-scones; and whisky-and-water was esteemed the correct beverage with which to wash both down. The same worthy cook was famed for her rabbit soup, a large basinful

of which cost fivepence, a scone being given into the bargain. But it must be understood that in those days rabbits could be bought for sixpence apiece. This same Broughton Street house was a great place for "Sabbath-night teas," a cup of tea with thick slices of bread-and-butter, and a plate filled with the famous "salmon hash," at one shilling per head. A large business was done on these Sunday evenings, for the house speedily became a "howff" for young men and women keeping company.

Most of the taverns and hotels in Edinburgh, when I went there in 1837, had their reputation for some speciality. "Paterson's," in the Fleshmarket Close, had many good things, but the best was its claret. It was the meeting-place of several select bodies of quiet citizens, who three or four times in the course of the year assembled to enjoy "a crack" over a good dinner and a tumbler or two of whisky-toddy. Many a curious wager, too, used to be worked off in that tavern. Among the memorabilia of this house may be mentioned what once was called "the great beef-steak

dinner of 1840," when a party of about thirty citizens of renown arranged to hold a meeting, the object of which was to test which cut of ox made the best beef-steak, sundry wagers being dependent on the result. "Wits from the Parliament House" (to say good things), officers from the two garrisons (to listen), three or four of the gravest of Edinburgh merchants (to keep good order), were there, while the professional comedians were represented by Murray, the Manager, and MacKay, "the Bailie." In addition to these there assembled a motley dozen of editors, literary men, and men knowing nothing perhaps save the fine art of eating and drinking, but knowing it well. After dinner came a lady to grace the assemblage with her presence; that adventurous female, however, was a "mystification" enacted by "the Bailie" in order to the advancement of the general hilarity. I do not know what judgment was recorded; probably, when the verdict was called for, the jury would not be in the fittest condition to give one which could be accepted by the world as final. But one of the men who was present gave it

as *his* opinion (and he was well entitled from his great experience to lay down the law) that a steak cut from the ribs of the ox and “brandered,” bone and all, was by far the best of the lot. So let it be—I have no desire to dispute the verdict.

Near “Paterson’s” was a house of humbler pretensions, famed for its preparation of “potted head” (brawn), which was always in great demand by shopmen and the smaller class of tradesmen. A plateful of potted head with mashed potatoes and a bottle of Prestonpan’s table-beer was considered as “cheap and filling” at the price of sevenpence! Edinburgh was long famed for its “pie-shops.” Spence’s, in Hunter Square (which I have mentioned before), used to do a great business in pies, and the same good fortune attended a dealer in the South Side; and Mrs. Lawson’s, in Rose Street. The Edinburgh “closes” had many well-frequented taverns largely indebted to some “clique” for support, probably a lodge of Freemasons or “Free Gardeners,” or some such trade—the Master-masons (not “Free-masons”) having one or two special places of

meeting, Master-carpenters another, and so on. There were houses specially affected by town-councillors and city officials, while the smaller fry of the Parliament House had also their favourite taverns. A great amount of political, municipal, and other business was amicably settled in these houses over a plate of "rizzarded (grilled) haddies," a Welsh rabbit, or a dish of stewed ribs of beef (famous dishes at the "Anchor Tavern" and "John's Coffee-house"); and, after business on occasions, "high jinks" of a most pronounced kind were not seldom engaged in to the accompaniment of much whisky-punch or toddy.

"The poor man's oysters here are sold, to buy them needs no gold," was the beginning of a long poetical address which the proprietor of a "mussel emporium" in the Old Town had caused to be written early in the century as a means of advertising his trade. His place, which was near the head of the Canongate, was still being carried on during part of the time I was an apprentice, and the mussels seemed to be highly appreciated. They were served not only *au naturel*, but

cooked in eleven different modes. As the rhyme ran,—

“You can have them in stew ;
Roasted, too—
And curried and baked as well.”

I cannot, however, at present remember all the “eleven ways” ; but the rhyme concluded,—

“They are cooked, and ready for all,
And sixpence only is the call.”

And for that sum I know the customer was allowed *two* helpings, with a bread-and-butter accompaniment. “This mussel-house,” it was written in one of the old Edinburgh periodicals, “is frequented by many very genteel people.” If that was true, it had fallen from its high estate before my young days.

One of the chief suburban resorts (and at one time there were many of them) enjoyed a large degree of celebrity. It was a house situated at Duddingstone, known as the “Sheep’s-head Tavern,” and, there being then no Forbes Mackenzie Act to prevent it, was open on Sundays. As may be surmised from the name, it was for its service of sheep’s-

head broth many of the older Edinburgh citizens used to walk out to Duddingstone to enjoy a plateful of the dainty. When winter came, and Duddingstone Loch was crowded with curlers and skaters, the tavern had immense custom in the curlers' fare, salt beef and greens. This house became a favourite place of call of Dr. Robert Chambers and his friend, Sheriff Henry Glassford Bell. There was another popular tavern in the same village, "The Museum," so called from the house containing a room devoted to stuffed birds, foreign shells, and other curiosities.

There was in the days of auld lang syne a very popular house of public entertainment at Cramond Brig, to which many citizens resorted occasionally for an afternoon's outing, and it is still a place of popular resort. "Cramond Brig Hotel" was a popular house of call at one time of many of the minor literati of Edinburgh. The tavern, kept for a long period by Mrs. McAra, in the village of Cramond, where on Saturdays a good dinner of cold salmon and lamb was provided, was closed many years ago, as was also the house kept by Robert

Gloag ; nor is the house open now at Mutton Hole (Davidson's Mains), where Ramsay of Barnton, and his frolicsome friends, were wont to resort to eat pork-chops and drink first-rate claret. That house was close to the Queensferry Road, and when Mr. Ramsay was driving the "Defiance" coach, he would halt for a brief interval at the "Vintner's," so as to allow a little profitable business to be done by the proprietor of the house, who had been at one time in service at Barnton. Many other suburban taverns might be enumerated, such as Mrs. Harper's at Corstorphine, which was often visited—especially on Sundays—by little parties from Edinburgh, and especially by printers, the landlady having many friends in that trade.

At one period, I believe, there would be in the immediate vicinity of the city more than fifty places where "refreshments" could be obtained, and these were often crowded, especially on Sundays, by working folk and their children, such excursions being very popular. A strawberry feast, a "feed of gooseberries," or a basin of curds and cream, were the usual refreshments of these "*bonâ fide*

travellers." In the King's Park, on a fine Sunday, I have counted as many as fifty dealers in curds and cream, all busily touting for custom. At some of the suburban gardens or other unlicensed places a jorum of whisky-and-water could be obtained by those who "knew their way about."

In my young days the landlords of suburban "publics" endeavoured to recommend their houses to customers by means of what were designated "poetic" sign-boards. I remember well some of the doggerel verses which did service. Two from Haddington (where I was at school) may be given here as examples; the first was as follows:—

"Hech! man, come in, lay down your stick,
An' rest a while your weary body;
The Ale we sell we buy frae Dick—
Dunlop supplies the Toddy."

(Dick was a well-known Edinburgh brewer, and Dunlop a distiller at Haddington.) Another of the same ran pretty much as follows:—

"Emly's pies, so spicy and hot,
Cost you but twopence apiece, man;
Here you can drink and no' be a sot—
Porter's but fivepence a quart, man."

The late James Ballantyne had a theory that these effusions were mostly the work of "a travelling poet," who scoured the country, selling a volume of his own verses. This man was at all times glad of a crust of bread-and-cheese—and "a dram"; and though his minimum price for the volume—the contents of which all bore a strong family likeness—was a shilling, the author accepted more when he could get it.

Mr. John McPhail, printing overseer in Mr. Tait's establishment, was ever ready to recite a few of the signs of which he had taken note in his Saturday afternoon rambles. The following I copied from his scrap-book :—

" This is the original old 'Bee Hive,'
Succeeding the 'Thistle and Rose'—
Here you may drink our ale, and thrive;
Or taste our famous Athole Brose."

(Need I explain that "Athole Brose" is a delicious mixture of whisky and honey?)

The following was printed above the door of a cellar public-house situated in a close off High Street, Edinburgh :—

“There’s a spirit down here that’s bound for to cheer,
The drink, drinking of which you never can rue ;
There’s porter from Dublin, and Prestonpans beer,
That’s been relished by thousands, and long before you.”

On the side of the door of a suburban public-house appeared the following :—

“Walk in, my weary traveller, and you’ll find within
The best of whisky, brandy, shrub, and gin : ”

and on the other side the legend was concluded :—

“Enjoy your wee drappie and pleasantly pay, ‘
Then ‘Thank you, kind sir,’ I’m bound for to say.”

IV

Wine in the thirties and forties of the present century was not in Scotland an everyday commodity, even in the houses of the well-to-do. As an instance of this, I remember hearing, in 1838, of a well-known citizen, a wealthy magistrate, who was giving a dinner-party, which was to be honoured by the presence of the Lord Provost, the Town Clerk, and the Sheriff of Midlothian, laying in specially for the occasion four bottles of

sherry, and as many of port, these being the only wines put on the table. No doubt they were followed by plenty of punch and toddy. The lady of the house, however, was the proud possessor of a dozen bottles of choice Madeira, a decanter of which was produced in honour of any very particular visitor who called ; and that dozen was reported to have lasted for years.

In the higher professional circles of Edinburgh, half a century ago, in addition to port and sherry, claret was much used as a table wine, and an occasional bottle of hock was placed in evidence ; champagne, however, was rarely seen at table, except on special occasions. I remember well the surprise expressed by the wife of an Edinburgh solicitor, on being told by her husband on his return from Glasgow, where he had been the guest of a rich merchant, that there had been "Champagne every day at dinner."

It is probably not generally known that Sir Walter Scott was one of the first to popularize champagne in Scotland. At his dinner-parties, and they were not infrequent, the wine was liberally served to his guests, to many of whom

it was an agreeable novelty ; and it was not unknown at the novelist's family dinners. John Ballantyne, on his visits to the continent, was accustomed to bring over considerable quantities of the brands he knew so well how to select, of the wine which the Ettrick Shepherd called "yon kind" ; its destination, of course, being the cellars of his patron at Castle Street and Abbotsford, where the bins were at all times well stocked with good liquor. Mr. Cadell, Sir Walter's publisher in latter days, treasured at his house at Hailes, near Edinburgh, a few dozens of champagne which he had received from his illustrious friend ; and which was so much prized that a bottle was buzzed only on great occasions. An old schoolmaster, in whom the author of "Waverley" took some interest, and invited occasionally to dine at his table in Castle Street, after having for the first time drunk a glass or two of the sparkling vintage, exclaimed, "Losh bless me ! Sir Walter, but that beats a' the lemonade I ever tasted—it makes me feel just awfu' fine." Tom Purdie's verdict was, "It's next to whisky, and far easier to drink."

Mr. Charles Tait, who, as I have already said, succeeded John Ballantyne as the "Christie & Manson" of Edinburgh, did much to popularize the use of wine in Scotland. At his sales (which took place at his rooms in Hanover Street) the wines disposed of were always of high quality. At first the sales were confined to the disposal of gentlemen's cellars, in which had been accumulated fine old ports and sherries, Madeira and clarets, not forgetting, of course, the "wine of the country"—whisky. In time, however, the scope of these sales was extended, hocks, Champagnes, Moselle, and Burgundies being obtained from outside, and the wine list at Edinburgh dinners, it was observed, extended accordingly. As "sampling" was gratis at these sales they were well attended; and if many persons ventured into the auction-room who had no other intention than to enjoy a sample, together with the necessary biscuit and morsel of cheese which were provided at discretion, some no doubt were tempted to become buyers. But there was another and numerous "assistance" on whom the clever auctioneer

used to keep his eye. Occasionally they would be covered with confusion by his elaborately polite query, "what they thought of the wine they were drinking?" "Try another glass of that Madeira, Mr. Loafer," he would say, "and then give me your candid opinion."

Despite the fact that wine, as has been stated, was seldom to be found in middle-class houses, there were a number of cellars of celebrity in Edinburgh. Lord Jeffrey, it was said, could produce over thirty kinds to his guests at Craigcrook; and a Lord Justice Clerk of some forty years ago was as famous for his Ports as for his law. The secrets of the cellar were revealed in the auction-rooms. "This Madeira, gentlemen, has been twice round the world; you surely cannot expect me to knock it down at five pounds a dozen," said Mr. Charles Tait at one of his sales; and a couple of pounds per bottle had to be offered before he let the hammer fall. About the same time—" 'tis sixty years since"—there was a "Madeira Fraud," about which nothing ever got into the newspapers. A parcel of that wine was announced for sale. The auctioneer

believed it to be genuine, and as the company, which included several of the Edinburgh wine fanciers, pronounced it to be of "extraordinary quality," it brought 96s. the dozen. But the buyers discovered that the bulk was not up to sample—in fact, the wine was discovered to be a disgusting concoction of common sherry and raisin liquor. The men who devised it were two impecunious grocers, but the auctioneer deemed it advisable to let the matter drop, taking back the wine from the purchasers, and bearing all the loss of this abominable fraud.

Long before my day claret was a common beverage, not only in Edinburgh but throughout Scotland generally. It came direct from France to Leith, and was commonly sold on draught. On Sundays, it was said, there used to be a larger demand than usual. A well-known physician of that olden time, who one Sunday evening sent his servant for a jug of red wine fresh from the barrel, was much annoyed at his supply being confiscated by the "seizers"—men who perambulated the streets on that day to see that no person was engaged in "worldly work," and who were

empowered to pounce upon evil-doers, and take from them all they were in possession of in the shape of food or drink. The doctor, determined to have his revenge, gave his servant on the next occasion a powder to place in the jug if the "seizers" troubled her. As usual, they were on the watch, and duly, as in duty bound, confiscated the ruddy liquor—and as duly drank it, which was no part of their duty. But they never again confiscated, or at all events never again drank, that physician's claret.

Before the close of "the forties," claret, port and sherry had come into pretty general use in the houses of the middle classes in Scotland; while in time, a few kinds of other wines, including champagne, were to be found in second-rate taverns. In many of these houses it was the fashion to exhibit poetical wine cards—the extreme badness of the verse being one of the attractions. Some such printed lines were hung up in one of the taverns at Bruntsfield Links, much frequented by the golfers. Four of them linger more or less accurately in my memory (the adopted French word in the

third line was commoner in my young days than it is now) :—

“ There’s whisky here, and claret too,
As also port and nutty sherry,
Madeira wine of pleasant goût ;
Come crack a bottle and be merry.”

But the publicans were not the only patrons of the poet. Other traders were in the habit of availing themselves of his services. I remember the following inscription, which was exhibited at the door of a “general merchant” in the Causeyside :—

“ Meal, barley, butter and cheese,
Soap, starch, blue and pease ;
Train oil, tobacco pipes and tees,
With whisky and loch-leeches ;
Pins to prick, and needles to sew,
And balls to clean leather breeches.”

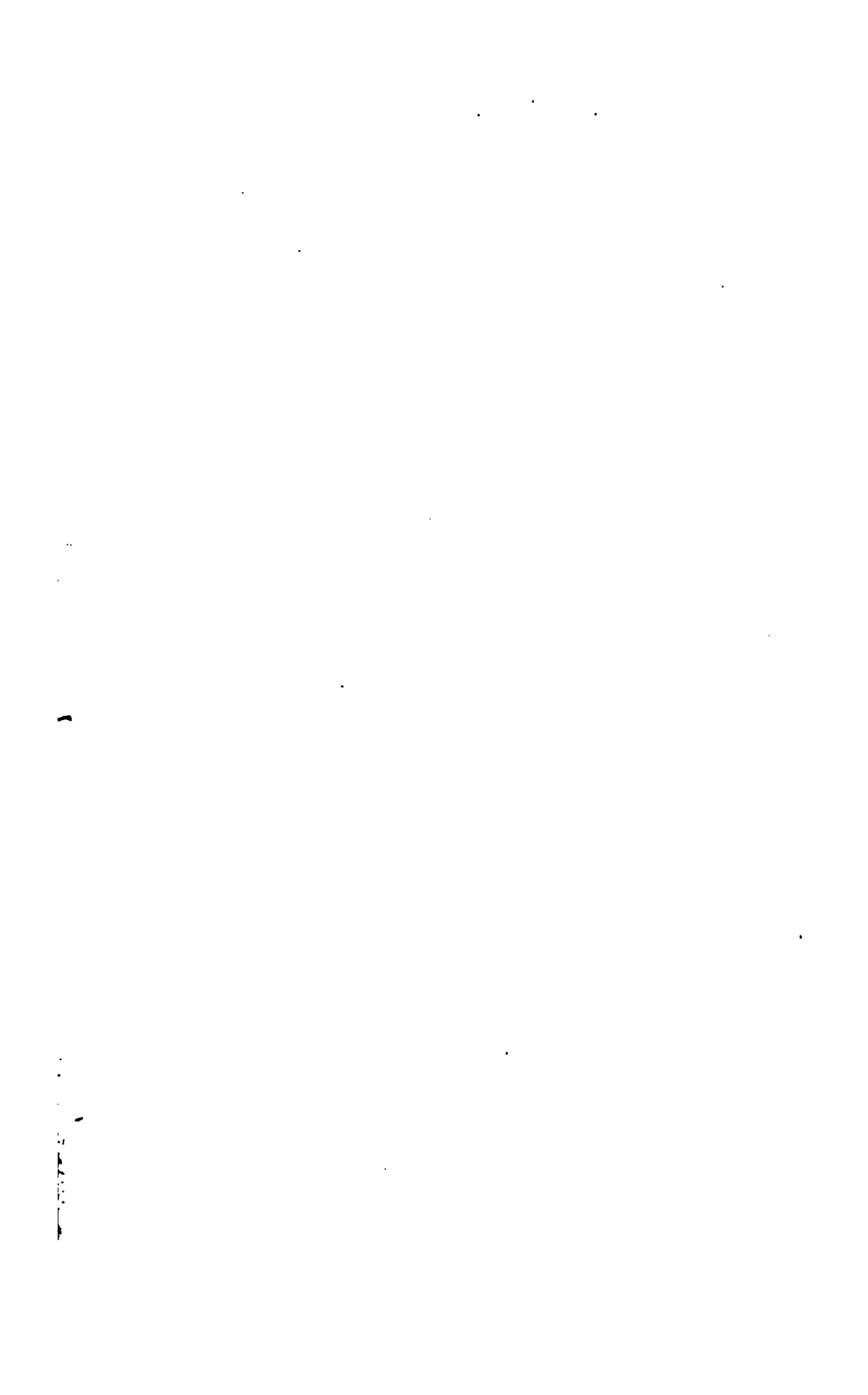
Sixty years since in Scotland punch was an almost universal accompaniment of after-dinner hilarity. “Glasgow punch” was especially famous ; and we have it on the authority of Mr. J. G. Lockhart that much of the rum which reached the Clyde from the West India

Islands went back thither in stout earthenware jars transmuted. Not a few of the Glasgow men of the olden time looked upon the "furnishing" of their china and silver bowls as an important duty—brewing the punch, by some of them, indeed, was treated as a solemn function—a kind of fine art not to be lightly gone about. It was a treat to see some of the old city fathers at this congenial work—how tenderly they dedicated the bowl by running the cut limes round the inside. And when the "browst" was deemed complete, but before it began to be ladled out, some good judge who might be at table was called upon to "pree" the compound and give his opinion, and that being favourable, the work of distribution commenced; then lips began to smack and tongues to wag, and song and story flowed freely as the bowl emptied. In some Glasgow houses of the olden time the recipe for the making of the punch was a secret which descended from sire to son, and was never betrayed.

Coming back, however, to our wines, it has been more than once stated that one of the

chief hindrances to the greater use of wine in Scotland by the middle classes some sixty years since was the cheap price and excellent quality of Scottish ales, which were largely consumed. Foreigners visiting Scotland were invariably delighted with the ale, and the exiled French Royalties of 1831, who lived for a time in the Royal Hotel in Edinburgh, called the liquor "Scottish Burgundy," a designation which, it was reported, their pawky landlord turned to practical account by charging all they drank at the rate of a crown a bottle! A capital idea of how wines have come to be "diffused" in Scotland was afforded twelve years ago, when a London barrister wrote to a friend living in the Isle of Skye to know if the place was sufficiently civilized to be visited by his wife and daughter. "Judge for yourself," was the reply; "the wine-card of the hotel where I am now staying offers you a choice of seven different brands of champagne!" One word of caution to my English readers, and I have done. Ale was the old *Scotch* national drink. In the Lowlands whisky was as much an importation (from the Highlands) as it was

in England. Burns never talked of whisky as the "wine of the country"—his country—that was "the nappy." But we all, Lowland and Highland, like the English, take kindly to the usquebaugh.



4/10/78
6/17/78

7/30/78

